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ABSTRACT

This volume presents three reports on drug-use and violence-prevention efforts and school-crime patterns in American schools. The reports are based on findings from the Study on School Violence and Prevention, which investigated the extent of problem behavior in 886 schools across the U.S. The findings indicate that schools in general were safe, but certain schools had significant problems that affected instruction and made some teachers and students feel unsafe. The higher rates of discipline problems in middle schools suggest that greater attention to prevention efforts in middle school may be warranted. School should focus on improving prevention activities by strengthening efforts to adopt, retain, or discard prevention efforts based on evidence of program effectiveness. While fighting did occur and the presence of weapons was not unheard of, the combination of the two was rarely seen in the same school. Theft was much more common than robbery, and while teachers may have been verbally abused, they rarely were attacked or threatened with a weapon. The fear of disorder did not seem to interfere with learning. Schools followed similar discipline procedures, but they varied considerably in how they recorded and used incident data. Schools that recorded high violence differed markedly from other schools in their size, location, and socioeconomic makeup. They tended to be in urban areas and had a high percentage of minority students. (RJM)

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WIDE SCOPE, QUESTIONABLE QUALITY

THREE REPORTS FROM THE STUDY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION

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WIDE SCOPE, QUESTIONABLE QUALITY:

DRUG AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

REPORT ON THE STUDY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION

WIDE SCOPE, QUESTIONABLE QUALITY:
DRUG AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

REPORT ON THE STUDY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION

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August 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results from the Study on School Violence and Prevention indicate that, while schools nationally experienced relatively low levels of serious violent crime, some schools did experience serious violence and disorder. In many schools, high levels of less serious violent crime and property crime were common, particularly in middle schools. To prevent such problem behavior and make schools more conducive to learning, schools implemented many and diverse prevention activities. However, on the whole, the quality of those prevention activities is poor. These findings, which are for the 1997-98 school year, suggest that schools need to improve the quality of prevention programming through attention to needs assessment, planning, increased use of research-based approaches, and monitoring of implementation.

STUDY BACKGROUND

The study on which these findings are based, the Study on School Violence and Prevention, was funded by the U.S. Department of Education (and conducted in collaboration with the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice) to investigate the extent of problem behavior in schools nationally and several aspects of delinquency prevention efforts in schools, such as types and quality of prevention efforts, how schools plan and use information about prevention options to improve their own efforts and school management, and sources of funding for school prevention activities.

During spring 1997, 886 elementary and secondary (i.e., both middle school and high school) principals provided information about prevention activities in their schools. During spring 1998, principals and prevention program providers in many of these same schools provided information on prevention efforts, their schools' discipline practices, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) funding for prevention activities. In addition, students and teachers in many of the participating secondary schools responded to surveys on their experiences with school disorder and with prevention activities; school district officials associated with these secondary schools also provided information on SDFSCA and non-SDFSCA programs and funding. The patterns of problem behavior found by the current study are generally consistent with those found by other recent studies.

Although this study has many strengths, including the use of multiple information sources to collect detailed information on characteristics of school prevention programming and adequacy of program implementation, it also has limitations, primarily with regard to response rates. Methodological issues are discussed in detail in the report's introduction and appendices.

In the remainder of this summary, we highlight main findings from the study.

PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS

During the 1997-98 school year, serious violent crime in schools was relatively infrequent. However, schools did experience high levels of less serious violent crime and property crime that compromised instruction in many classrooms. Middle schools experienced more problem behavior than other schools. On the whole, students and teachers felt safe at schools, although about one-quarter had concerns about safety and disorder.

Schools Reporting Incidents to Police

One measure of school safety and disorder is the number of crimes and disciplinary incidents that come to the attention of school administrators. The study asked principals about the number of crimes that they reported to law enforcement officials. In general, elementary schools tend to experience the lowest rates of serious incidents and middle schools the highest rates.

- According to principal reports, 66 percent of schools experienced one or more incidents of less serious violent crime or property crime (i.e., fighting without a weapon, vandalism, or theft) and 10 percent experienced at least one serious violent crime (i.e., fighting with a weapon or robbery).
- Compared with elementary and high schools, middle schools had higher levels of many types of problem behavior. According to principal reports, 21 percent of middle schools had one or more incidents of physical attack or fight with a weapon, compared to 2 percent of elementary schools and 11 percent of high schools. Principals also reported that 72 percent of middle schools experienced fights without a weapon, compared to 34 percent of elementary schools and 56 percent of high schools.
- Schools with high levels of serious violent crime—"problem schools"—were similar to all other schools on characteristics such as urbanicity (percent urban, suburban, and rural), free and reduced-price school lunch, and enrollment. Problem high schools also did not differ from the other high schools in terms of the percentage of minority students. However, problem middle schools had a higher percentage of minority students than all other middle schools.

Victimization of Students and Teachers

Another measure of school safety and disorder is the amount of victimization experienced by students and teachers while at school. This measure provides an important complement to data obtained from principals about incidents reported to police, since administrators are not always aware of all the incidents that occur in schools. The study asked students and teachers in secondary schools (middle and high schools) about their experiences with various types of crimes and disorderly conduct. Middle school students and teachers were in many cases more likely to be victimized than their high school counterparts.

- Approximately 18 percent of students in secondary schools were threatened with a beating, and 13 percent of students were attacked without a weapon. In terms of serious violent crime, 11 percent of students experienced at least one serious violent incident (robbery or threatened with a weapon) at school.

- A slightly higher percentage of middle school students than high school students were the victims of robbery. For example, 8 percent of middle school students were robbed of $1 or more in school, compared with 4 percent of high school students. Additionally, for all types of less serious violent crime and property crime, a higher percentage of middle schools students than high school students reported being victimized. For example, 19 percent of middle school students were physically attacked in school, compared with 10 percent of high school students.

- Approximately 62 percent of teachers experienced one or more incidents of less serious violent crime or property crime (i.e., threatened in remarks by a student, received obscene remarks or gestures from a student, damage to property, or theft). Forty percent of teachers received obscene remarks or gestures from a student. Serious crime aimed at teachers was relatively rare. Only 3 percent of teachers were attacked and received minor injuries, while even fewer (1%) were either confronted with weapons at school or were attacked and received injuries serious enough to require a doctor.

- A higher percentage of middle school teachers than high school teachers received obscene remarks or gestures from a student (46% of middle school teachers versus 40% of high school teachers) and middle school teachers were more likely (24%) than high school teachers (20%) to be threatened by a student.

- Although students and teachers in problem high schools and in other high schools reported similar levels of victimization, students and teachers in problem middle schools reported significantly higher levels of victimization for many specific types of crime than those in other middle schools.

Effects of Disorder on Teachers and Students

Members of the school community provide different perspectives on how the level of school safety and orderliness affects them.

- While most students and teachers reported feeling safe in their schools, about one-fourth said they would avoid a specific place at school out of fear that someone might hurt or bother them.
- More than one-quarter (27%) of teachers in middle and high schools reported that the behavior of some students kept them from teaching a fair amount or a great deal.

EFFORTS TO PREVENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS

Schools are implementing a wide range of prevention and disciplinary activities to address problem behavior. Unfortunately, the overall quality of many of these activities is inadequate when assessed against criteria established by the study for judging the quality of practices.

Wide Scope of Prevention Efforts

To reduce problem behavior, schools implemented many and diverse prevention activities.

- On average, each school used 9 out of 14 general types (e.g., counseling and behavior modification) of prevention efforts. Although a few principals reported using no activities at all, many reported using a large number of separate, specific activities—one school reported using 61. The median number of specific prevention activities per school was 14. Approximately 20 percent of schools used at least 25 unique activities and 6 percent reported using at least 40 unique activities.
- The most common type of activity aimed at changing individual behavior was prevention curriculum, instruction, or training (76%), followed by counseling, social work, psychological, or therapeutic services (74%). The most common type of school-wide prevention activity was simply providing students with information. More than 80 percent of schools provided isolated information about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Compared with other middle schools, problem middle schools (those with high levels of serious violent crime) used fewer of the different types of activities available to reduce negative behavior. Each problem middle school used approximately six different types of efforts, while each of the other middle schools uses, on average, eight different types of efforts. Problem high schools and other high schools were similar on the number of different prevention efforts implemented.

Low Quality of Prevention Efforts

Judging the quality of prevention activities was a multi-step process that entailed defining dimensions of quality and setting standards of adequacy. The standards of adequacy established for these dimensions were appropriate for the various types of activities. The dimensions and standards were based on expert judgment and a review of the literature on the effectiveness of prevention activities, including optimal planning practices, content, methods, and frequency and duration of activities. (For more detail, see Appendix B.)

While a large quantity of prevention activities were implemented in schools, the quality of those activities needs improvement. In general, activities designed to change the school or classroom environment were higher quality than those directed at altering student behavior or attitudes.

- Prevention activities designed to change the school or classroom environment were generally of higher quality than programs aimed at changing individual student behaviors or attitudes. On one summary measure of quality (average percentage of quality measures judged adequate), scores for different types of activities designed to change the school or classroom environment ranged from 73 percent adequate (for security and surveillance) to 51 percent adequate, while scores for programs aimed at changing individual student behaviors or attitudes ranged from 51 percent adequate to 42 percent adequate (for services and programs for family members).

- Compared to programs aimed at changing individual student behaviors or attitudes, activities designed to change the school or classroom environment tended to achieve higher ratings on several dimensions of quality, including level of use by school personnel, best practices for content, best practices for methods, duration, and frequency of operation.

- The quality of prevention programs is lowest in rural areas and highest in urban areas, though the difference is modest. Approximately 55 percent of the prevention activities in rural areas were judged adequate, compared to 60 percent of the activities in urban areas.

- For almost every type of program and each dimension examined, the quality of implementation was similar between the problem schools and other schools (at both the middle and high school levels).

Mixed Quality of Disciplinary Practices

Schools successfully communicated rules to students and monitored and recorded violations of those rules. However, schools need improvement on the range of responses that they make to student conduct and on the predictability and consistency of their disciplinary practices.

- Most schools communicated rules to students and monitored and recorded violations of rules. More than 95 percent of schools provided teachers, students, and parents with a copy of the school rules. Some 93 percent of schools were following best practices for communication and documentation of school rules and for keeping track of student behavior.

- Overall, schools used a variety of responses to desirable and undesirable student behavior. However, relatively few individual schools merited a "best practices" rating for the range of appropriate responses to misconduct (27%) and range of appropriate responses to desirable behavior (20%).

QUALITY OF PLANNING AND USE OF RESEARCH FOR PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

Mixed Picture on Quality of Planning

Sound planning (including identifying goals, selecting activities, and making decisions about how to target prevention efforts) is important, in part, because it was associated with high quality prevention activities. The planning that underlies prevention activities in schools was frequently influenced by school districts. Planning to meet school-wide prevention objectives tended to be of higher quality than the planning of individual-level prevention activities.

- The planning of prevention efforts was often influenced or shaped by the school district. Districts for almost one-half of middle and high schools required the schools to participate in needs assessments or an evaluation by administering district-sponsored surveys. Districts for 60 percent of these schools also required the schools to pick prevention activities from a list or at least offer this type of list. The majority of districts provided support for school planning of prevention activities in the form of assistance with conducting needs assessments, training on program planning and development, and training on program implementation. District involvement in school-level planning is important, in part, because districts often have greater expertise and resources to support planning than individual schools.

- Planning for many of the individual level prevention activities was weak. Although many individual-level prevention activities meet some criteria of sound planning, less than two-thirds of these activities met all of the criteria. However, planning for school-wide prevention efforts appeared to be considerably stronger than the planning for individual level activities.

- Problem schools (those with high levels of serious violent crime) and other schools tended to be similar on many aspects of program planning. However, problem middle schools were more often required to receive direction and assistance from their school districts, and are more often required to conduct some type of needs assessment or evaluation. Compared with other middle schools, problem middle schools are also more often required to prepare plans specifying how prevention resources will be used. For high schools, a higher percentage of problem schools than other schools receive training on program implementation.

Insufficient Use of Research

Although schools generally consulted a number of sources in selecting their activities, they typically placed a lower priority on research-based sources.

- On average, schools used two resources to select a given prevention activity. The resources most often used to select a prevention activity were other program providers (57% of activities) and meetings within the school district (51% of activities).
- Research-based information was among the less frequently used sources for activity selection. Formal outcome evaluations and publications summarizing research were used in the selection of 28 percent and 38 percent of activities, respectively.
- Perhaps as a result of the limited use of research-based information, only one-third of the prevention activities used methods or approaches found to be effective in the research literature, while 61 percent of the activities used content whose effectiveness was supported by research.

SDFSCA IMPORTANT TO FUNDING FOR SCHOOL PREVENTION EFFORTS

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) Program was the most common funding source for prevention activities in schools, though districts and schools also drew on a variety of other funding sources. Districts used SDFSCA funds to support diverse prevention activities. This funding was very important to district prevention programming.

- Districts for approximately 98 percent of schools nationally, public and private, provided prevention activities that were funded at least in part by SDFSCA. Many districts also drew on a wide variety of other federal, state, and local funding sources to support their prevention efforts.
- Districts used their SDFSCA funds for diverse prevention activities, including direct activities for students and indirect activities such as staff training. Activities that received a high degree of SDFSCA support include prevention instruction or training, counseling, and prevention activities to improve instructional practices in the classrooms.
- In the schools for which principals reported using SDFSCA funds, almost one-half of the principals stated that these funds were very important to improving or maintaining the safety and orderliness of their school, or in preventing problem behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions follow from the study's findings. Although schools in general were relatively safe, certain schools had significant problems that affected instruction and made some teachers and students feel unsafe. Clearly, approaches to preventing problem behavior in schools need improvement, particularly in light of the central findings that schools nationally were implementing a large number of prevention efforts but the quality of those efforts was low overall.

The findings of relatively higher rates of discipline problems in middle schools suggest that greater attention to prevention efforts in middle school may be warranted. Attention to middle school problems may also aid in preventing discipline problems in high school.

Schools also should consider focusing on improving the quality of their activities. Schools might start by strengthening efforts to adopt, retain, or discard prevention efforts based on research evidence on program effectiveness. In general, schools need to be more consistent in consulting the research literature and using that information to guide their prevention efforts. Given limited resources for prevention, focusing resources on strengthening promising, research-based activities—even at the expense of discontinuing weaker activities—may help schools and districts to better achieve their prevention goals.

Another area where improvement could be addressed is in the area of program planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Strengthening needs assessments, including collecting information on the prevalence of problem behavior, would assist schools and districts in identifying problem areas to allow for better targeting of prevention efforts. Greater emphasis on monitoring the implementation of prevention activities would help to ensure that they remain consistent with program models. Collecting information on the results of activities is critical to gauging which activities are proving effective and which need to be strengthened or discontinued.

Schools and districts can also focus on the predictors of program quality. In their report on this study, Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Czeh, Cantor, Crosse, and Hantman (2000) identified several predictors, including extensiveness and quality of training of the staff that implement the activities and supervision of the activities. The increased costs associated with these and other factors could be offset, in part, by decisions to fund fewer but stronger activities.

Ideally, along with a greater focus on research, schools will adopt a "continuous improvement" process, whereby quality of implementation, results of activities, and incidents of problem behavior are tracked to serve as a basis for modifying activities and developing future plans.

Resources for Improving Quality

Districts and schools have a variety of sources available to them to assist in identifying effective programs and activities. For example, the 1999 Annual Report on School Safety, a joint publication of the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, provides descriptions of model programs designated as promising or of demonstrated effectiveness, along with resource lists of agencies, organizations, and websites for further information. (See www.ed.gov/PDFDocs/InterimAR.pdf.) The U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools program used an expert panel process to identify exemplary and promising drug and violence prevention programs based on evidence of effectiveness. (See www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ORAD/KAD/expert_panel/2001exemplary_sddfs.html and www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ORAD/KAD/expert_panel/2001promising_sddfs.html.) Additional information on developing high-quality school-based prevention programs is available from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program website. (See www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/.)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY i

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS x

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 1
   - Introduction 1
   - Study Objectives 3
   - Method 3
   - Strengths and Limitations 5
   - Report Organization 7

2. PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS 8
   - Although Schools Experience High Levels of Less Serious Violent Crime and Property Crime, Serious Violent Crime Is Infrequent 8
   - Middle Schools Experience More Problem Behavior than Other Schools 10
   - Students and Teachers Generally Feel Safe at School 13
   - Problem Schools: Characteristics and Problem Behavior 15

3. EFFORTS TO PREVENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS 26
   - Schools Are Implementing a Wide Variety of Prevention Activities 26
   - Schools Are Using Many Prevention Activities 31
   - Most Schools Communicate Rules to Students and Monitor and Record Violations of Rules 32
   - Schools Use a Variety of Responses to Desirable and Undesirable Student Behavior 32
   - Schools Are Following Best Practices and Policies on School Rules and on Tracking Student Behavior but Need Improvement on the Range of Responses to Student Conduct and on Predictable and Consistent Discipline 33
   - Problem Schools: Efforts to Prevent Problem Behavior 35

4. QUALITY OF EFFORTS TO PREVENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS 39
   - Quality of Prevention Programming in Schools Is Low 39
   - Activities Designed to Change the School or Classroom Environment Are Higher Quality Than Those Aimed at Altering Student Behaviors or Attitudes 41
   - Security and Surveillance Efforts Are Implemented with the Highest Quality and Services to Family Members Are Implemented with the Lowest Quality 43
   - Problem Schools: Implementation of Efforts to Prevent Problem Behavior 45

5. PLANNING AND INFORMATION 48
   - Many School Districts Influence the Planning of Prevention Activities at Schools 48
   - revention Planning Is Weak for Many Individual Activities 50
   - Sound Planning Is Related to High-quality Prevention Activities 51
   - Problem Schools: Planning and Information 52

6. FUNDING FOR PREVENTION EFFORTS IN SCHOOLS 57
   - SDFSCA is the Most Widely Used Source of Funding for Prevention Activities, though the Districts for Many Schools Also Receive Funding from Other Sources 56
   - Districts Use SDFSCA Funds to Support a Wide Variety of Prevention Activities 57
   - SDFSCA Funding is Very Important to District Prevention Programming 58

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

7. CONCLUSIONS....59
Shift Resources to Emphasize Quality over Quantity....59
Improve Program Planning and Monitoring....59
Strengthen Factors Associated with Quality of Programming....60

LIST OF APPENDIXES

Appendix Page
A. STUDY METHODS....62
B. METHODS AND CRITERIA FOR JUDGING THE ADEQUACY OF PREVENTION PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES....77

List of Tables

Table

3-1 Prevention activity categories and definitions....28

3-2 School-wide arrangements and definitions....29

A-1 School-level response rates for the first phase of data collection....69

A-2 School-level participation rates for the second phase of data collection....69

A-3 Principal response rate....70

A-4 Provider response rate....70

A-5 Teacher response rate....70

A-6 Student response rate....71

B-1 Measures of program quality....78

B-2 Criteria used to assess adequacy or best practices for quality measures that have similar criteria across program or activity types....81

B-3 Criteria used to assess adequacy or best practices for quality measures that have different criteria across program or activity types....82

B-4 Measures of quality for school-wide discipline practices and cut points for assessing adequacy....84

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

List of Figures

Figure Page

2-1 Percentage of schools in which one or more incidents of crime were reported to law enforcement – 1997-98 school year 9

2-2 Percentage of students reporting one or more incidents of personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year 11

2-3 Percentage of teachers reporting one or more incidents of personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year 12

2-4 Percentage of teachers reporting on the extent to which student behavior prevents them from teaching – 1997-98 school year 14

2-5 Characteristics of problem schools and other schools – 1997-98 school year 16

2-6 Characteristics of students in problem schools and other schools – 1997-98 school year 17

2-7 Percentage of problem middle schools and other middle schools in which one or more incidents of crime were reported to law enforcement – 1997-98 school year 19

2-8 Percentage of problem high schools and other high schools in which one or more incidents of crime were reported to law enforcement – 1997-98 school year 20

2-9 Percentage of students in problem middle schools and other middle schools reporting personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year 21

2-10 Percentage of students in problem high schools and other high schools reporting personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year 22

2-11 Percentage of teachers in problem middle schools and other middle schools reporting personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year 24

2-12 Percentage of teachers in problem high schools and other high schools reporting personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year 25

3-1 Percentage of schools using each type of prevention activity – 1997-98 school year 30

3-2 Percentage of schools using specific responses to desirable student conduct – 1997-98 school year 34

3-3 Percentage of problem middle schools and other middle schools using each type of prevention activity – 1997-98 school year 36

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Figure Page

3-4 Percentage of problem high schools and other high schools using each type of prevention activity – 1997-98 school year 37

4-1 Percentage of programs or activities judged adequate for each quality measure – 1997-98 school year 40

4-2 Average percentage of quality measures judged adequate for each type of prevention activity – 1997-98 school year 44

4-3 Average percentage of quality measures judged adequate for selected prevention activities for problem middle schools and other middle schools – 1997-98 school year 46

4-4 Average percentage of quality measures judged adequate for selected prevention activity for problem high schools and other high schools – 1997-98 school year 47

5-1 Percentage of problem schools and other schools in districts reporting mandated school planning of prevention activities – 1997-98 school year 53

5-2 Percentage of problem schools and other schools in districts providing support for school planning of prevention activities – 1997-98 55

WIDE SCOPE, QUESTIONABLE QUALITY: DRUG AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

Report on the Study on School Violence and Prevention

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Concern about youth violence has increased dramatically across the country. This has been especially true for violence that occurs in schools. Schools should provide disciplined and orderly environments that are conducive to learning and provide safe havens from violence. This report examines the status of school safety nationally and what schools are doing to promote safety and prevent problem behavior.

Introduction

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), is the largest school-based federal program directed at preventing student drug use and promoting school safety. As part of the 1994 reauthorization of SDFSCA, Congress mandated that ED collect information on efforts to prevent violence in schools nationally. ED initiated the Study on School Violence and Prevention to describe the level of problem behavior, including violence, in schools; to learn about the measures that schools are taking to prevent problem behavior and promote school safety; and to examine the use of funds allocated through SDFSCA.

In the last decade, several studies have investigated the prevalence of problem behavior at schools and some of the factors associated with it. For example, Katchur and colleagues (1996) reported on the number of school-associated deaths that occurred from July 1992 through June 1994. Other studies that have investigated problem behavior in schools (e.g., possession of weapons) include Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97 (Heaviside, Rowand, Williams & Farris, 1998), Violence-Related Attitudes and Behaviors of High School Students—New York City, 1992 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993); Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999); Monitoring the Future Survey (Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman, 1998); and School

Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (Chandler, Chapman, Rand, and Taylor, 1998).

However, very few studies have examined the types of prevention efforts that schools are using and how well the schools are implementing these efforts. One of the more comprehensive studies was conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education (1992). This study defined and described 26 promising prevention strategies and reported on the utilization and perceived impact of these strategies in Minnesota public schools. While useful, the study did not describe program implementation. Moreover, the study had a state rather than a national focus and was conducted more nearly ten years ago. More recently, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (1995) reported on a nationwide search to find effective efforts to reduce school violence, particularly gun violence. Although this study investigated efforts nationwide, it focused solely on promising prevention strategies. An intensive national effort undertaken by the National School Board Association (1993) lists more than 750 prevention programs organized into 30 different categories. This effort and others (e.g., National School Safety Center, 1995; Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1995) identified a multitude of prevention strategies, but they neither provided national estimates of the types of prevention strategies schools are implementing nor assessed how the programs are being implemented.

The Study on School Violence and Prevention is the first study in more than 20 years to examine in detail what schools nationally are doing to promote school safety, as well as describe the level of problem behavior in schools. Although its title implies that we focused exclusively on violence, the study also encompasses other types of undesirable behavior (e.g., drug abuse and property crime) in schools. We refer to all of these types of illegal or prohibited behavior in schools, violent and nonviolent, as "problem behavior."

The Study on School Violence and Prevention was a cooperative effort between ED and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), U.S. Department of Justice. Mandated by Congress to investigate the extent of violence in schools, as well as efforts to prevent violence, ED commissioned the Study on School Violence and Prevention. At the same time, NIJ awarded a grant to conduct the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools. To maximize resources and minimize the burden to schools, the agencies and external researchers and evaluators agreed to merge many of the study activities. In this report, we refer to the project as the Study on School Violence and Prevention; in NIJ and other publications, the project is called the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools.

Study Objectives

We know that some schools are safer than others and that some schools appear to be more successful than others in implementing efforts to prevent problem behavior. Understanding the factors and processes that contribute to school safety and the conditions under which prevention programs are well implemented is critical to policymakers and school officials. Hence, the study has focused on the extent and nature of problem behavior in schools according to students, teachers, and principals; and on the types of prevention efforts that are underway in schools and how well schools are implementing these efforts. The study has also investigated how prevention activities are funded and the role of SDFSCA in these efforts. The following study questions have guided the study.

- What is the incidence of problem behavior in schools nationally?
- What types of efforts are underway in schools to prevent problem behavior?
- How well are efforts to prevent problem behavior implemented?
- To what extent do schools use sound planning processes and information on school prevention options to improve school management?
- What sources of funding (including SDFSCA funds) do schools use to support prevention efforts?
- What are the policy-relevant characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools?

Although this study did seek to assess the implementation of prevention activities and to identify factors that may contribute to school safety, rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of these activities and factors was beyond its scope.

Method

The Study on School Violence and Prevention is based on three separate data collection and analysis efforts.

- For the national level of the study, we conducted secondary analyses of the data collected for the Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence, which was sponsored by the National Center on Education Statistics (Heaviside et. al., 1998); this survey collected information on school crime and violence prevention efforts from administrators in a probability sample of public elementary and secondary schools.

- The intermediate level of the study collected information on school crime and efforts intended to prevent problem behavior from multiple sources (e.g., school district administrators, principals, and program providers) in a probability sample of public and private elementary and secondary schools.
- The intensive level of the study drew on detailed quantitative and qualitative information collected from multiple sources in a purposive sample of 40 public secondary schools that participated in the intermediate level.

This report presents what we have learned from the data collected for the intermediate level of the study. We report on the national level and intensive level of the study separately.

Sample. From all public and private (sectarian and nonsectarian) schools in the United States, this study sampled 1,287 elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools to participate in the study. We stratified the sample by instructional level (elementary, middle, and senior high school) and metropolitan status (rural, suburban, and urban), because we hypothesized that both school problem behavior and prevention activities were likely to differ greatly on both of these factors. Using an equal probability of selection sampling method, we selected 143 schools from each of the nine strata. We recruited schools for the study through an extensive mail and telephone campaign.

Data Collection. We conducted the first phase of intermediate level data collection, the principal screener survey, by means of mail survey with telephone followup. For this phase, we asked principals to report on the number and types of prevention activities in place at their schools. Their reports were guided by a comprehensive taxonomy of prevention efforts that classified activities into 19 different groups ranging from individual-level prevention instruction or training to school-level activities intended to change or maintain the culture or climate of the school. (See Chapter 3 for more detailed information on these activities.) Gottfredson Associates, Inc. developed the taxonomy after conducting an extensive review of the types of prevention activities implemented in schools nationally.

The second phase of the intermediate level data collection entailed a second principal survey and surveys of individuals coordinating prevention activities (program providers) in the same schools that participated in the initial principal survey. The principal survey collected information on principal leadership, organizational capacity, discipline policy and management of student behavior, incidents of problem behavior reported to police, and funding sources for programs. The program provider survey collected information on provider background and training, program selection and program implementation, including type of students served and amount of services delivered, as well as the use of best practices.[1] For schools that reported more than one prevention activity in a given category (i.e., prevention curriculum, instruction, or training; security and surveillance), we used probability sampling to select one of these activities, and collected information on only the selected activity at the school.

At middle schools and high schools (secondary schools), in addition to surveying principals and program providers, the second phase of data collection included surveying all teachers and a probability sample of students. (Student participation was voluntary; participating students were anonymous, and parents had the opportunity to refuse participation for their children.) The teacher questionnaire focused on school safety, victimization, school climate, and level of implementation of prevention programming. The student survey collected information on school safety, victimization, problem behavior, and school climate.

The second phase of data collection also included a survey of officials (primarily SDFSCA coordinators) in the districts associated with the middle and high schools participating in the study. This survey covered SDFSCA and non-SDFSCA programs and funding, as well as interactions between the district and school personnel that operate prevention programs.

Analysis. In this report, we present weighted estimates. That is, the results reflect the probabilities of selection and nonresponse, making it more likely that the results presented are representative of schools nationally.

Where appropriate, we conducted tests of statistical significance to check whether or not observed differences among groups are simply due to chance. Except where noted, we highlight in the text only differences that are statistically significant at a probability of less than or equal to five percent.

Strengths and Limitations

The main strengths of the Study on School Violence and Prevention are that it used multiple sources of information on problem behavior in schools and collected detailed information on the types and implementation of prevention efforts. This is the first study in more than 20 years to obtain information nationally on problem behavior in schools from multiple sources (i.e., students, teachers, and principals). It is also the first study to collect detailed information on how schools seek to prevent problem behavior and to promote safe and orderly environments nationally.

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[1] Best practices were based on expert judgement and a review of the literature on the effectiveness of prevention activities. (See Gottfredson et al., 2000.)

Another strength is the extensive data collected on the implementation of prevention efforts and analyses designed to evaluate the adequacy of implementation. Additionally, the types of activities covered go beyond what are typically considered prevention programs (e.g., prevention instruction and training), to include all activities undertaken by schools to prevent problem behavior and promote school safety (e.g., improvements to instructional practices).

The chief limitations of the study are the response rates achieved and level of detail available. The study encountered much greater difficulty than anticipated in obtaining the cooperation of schools. We obtained a 69 percent response rate in the screening phase of data collection, and 53 percent of the schools originally sampled participated in one or more of the different data collection efforts during the detailed phase. Forty-nine percent of schools participated in the principal survey; 50 percent of the secondary schools participated in the teacher survey; and 38 percent of the secondary schools participated in the student survey. Nonresponse tended to be higher for schools predominantly located in urban areas and for non-Catholic private schools. Hence, these types of schools are underrepresented in the responding schools. We sought to correct for the under-representation through nonresponse adjustments to weights. However, to the extent that the nonresponding schools differed from other schools on the variables of interest, their absence may still influence the study results. (See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of response rates and weighting.)

Additionally, although a great deal of information was collected from program providers and other sources for the intermediate level, surveys necessarily limit the extent to which we can learn about the processes and reasons underlying some of the phenomena observed. With the in-person interviews that we conducted for the intensive level of the study (reported on separately), we were able to explore some issues in greater depth, although for a much smaller number of schools.

Report Organization

This report is organized around the topics covered by the study questions. The chapters are as follows.

- **Chapter 1**, above, provides an introduction to and background about problem behavior in schools.
- **Chapter 2** describes the extent of problem behavior in schools, including the types of victimization experienced by students and teachers, and how students and teachers perceive the safety of their schools.
- **Chapter 3** discusses efforts used by schools to prevent problem behavior, including the number of efforts in place by instructional level and the number of different types of efforts in place.
- **Chapter 4** covers the implementation of efforts to prevent problem behavior and assesses differences in quality of implementation by type of effort and type of school.
- **Chapter 5** describes how schools and districts plan prevention activities and how they use information (i.e., on effectiveness) in doing so.
- **Chapter 6** presents information on how districts and schools fund prevention programs and on the importance of SDFSCA funds to prevention activities.
- **Chapter 7** discusses our conclusions and their implications for policy and practice.

In Chapters 2 to 5, we also contrast schools with high levels of serious violent behavior with other schools on some of the topics covered in the chapters. These results allow us to consider the characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools.

In Appendix A, we provide additional information on our methodology. We provide additional information on definitions and measures of program quality in Appendix B.

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2. PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS

Despite the publicity about school violence, elementary and secondary schools nationally are relatively safe. Serious violent crime is rare, relative to less serious violent crime and property crime. Middle schools have higher levels of many types of problem behavior than other schools. Although students and teachers generally perceive their schools as safe, teachers report that problem behavior often interferes with teaching.

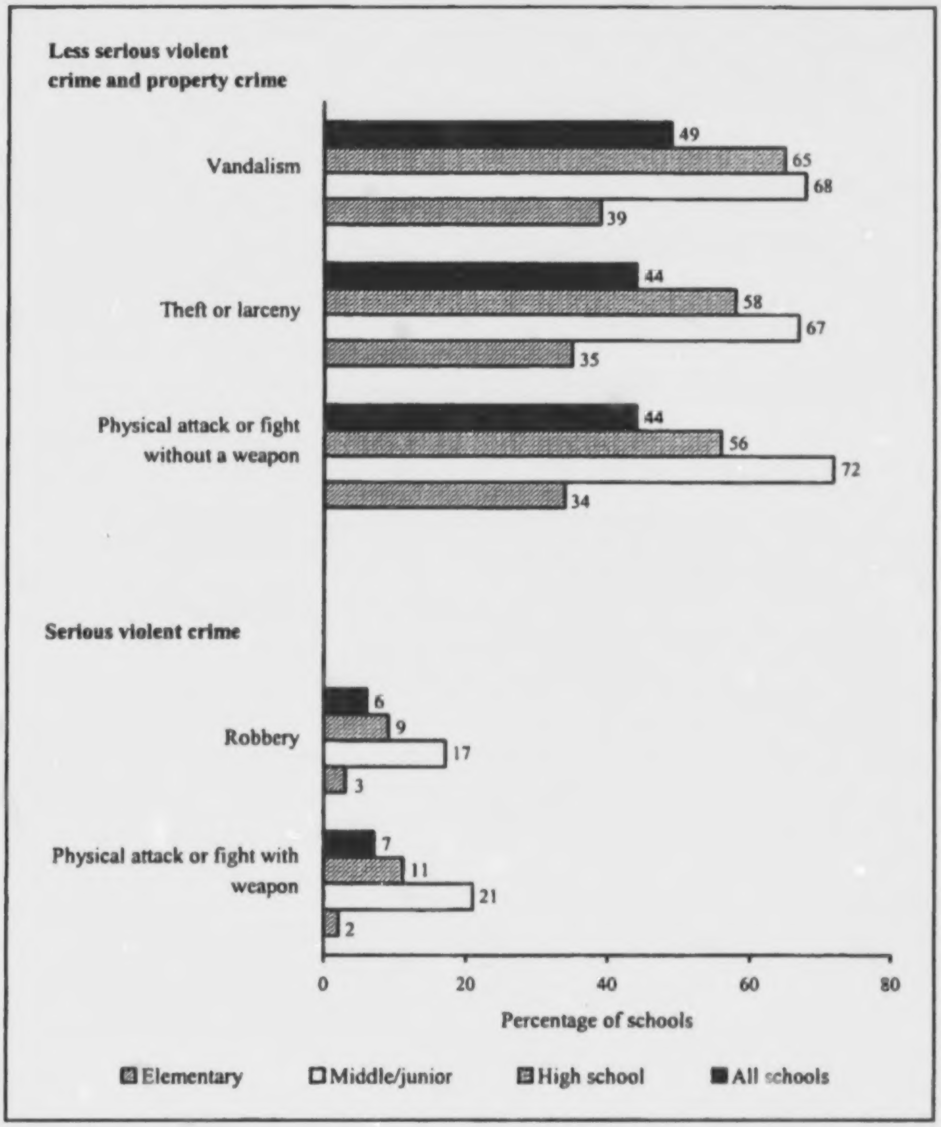
This chapter is based on the results of surveys of principals, students, and teachers in our national probability sample of schools. Elementary school, middle school, and high school principals reported on the number of incidents of problem behavior for their schools, during and after regular school hours; we report the results in terms of the percentage of schools nationally that experienced at least one incident of different types of problem behavior. A probability sample of middle school and high school students at the schools reported on whether or not they were the victims of different types of crimes in school and on whether or not they avoided certain locations, in and out of school, because of safety concerns; we report the results in terms of the percentage of students nationally. Middle school and high school teachers at the schools reported on whether or not they were the victims of different types of crimes in school, whether or not they avoided certain locations in school because of safety concerns, and the extent to which problem behavior interfered with their teaching; we report the results in terms of the percentage of teachers nationally. The results are for the 1997-98 school year.

Although Schools Experience High Levels of Less Serious Violent Crime and Property Crime, Serious Violent Crime Is Relatively Infrequent

Elementary, middle, and senior high schools experience high levels of less serious violent crime and property crime. This problem behavior is noteworthy because it can potentially interfere with learning. However, serious violent crime, which can raise a high level of concern for the safety of students and school personnel, is relatively rare in schools.

Less serious violent crime and property crime. Approximately two-thirds of schools (66%) and students (66%) experienced one or more incidents of any type of less serious violent crime and property crime during the 1997-98 school year. Forty-four percent of schools reported to police one or more incidents of fighting without a weapon. (See Figure 2-1.) A similar percentage of schools reported

Figure 2-1. Percentage of schools reporting one or more incidents of crime to law enforcement – 1997-98 school year



to police at least one incident of theft or larceny (44%), or vandalism (49%) during the 1997-98 school year. Proportionally, fewer elementary schools reported one or more of these types of problem behavior (58%) than middle schools (85%) or high schools (77%).

During the 1997-98 school year, approximately 18 percent of students in middle or senior high schools were threatened with a beating, and 13 percent of students were physically attacked. (See Figure 2-2.) Forty-seven percent of students in middle and senior high schools experienced theft of property worth less than $1; 45 percent of students experienced theft of property worth $1 or more.

Approximately 62 percent of teachers experienced one or more incidents of any type of less serious violent crime and property crime. (See Figure 2-3.) Forty-two percent of teachers in middle and senior high schools received obscene remarks or gestures from a student during the past school year. A smaller number of teachers experienced damage to personal property worth less than $10 (28%), theft of property worth less than $10 (24%), and theft of property worth more than $10 (12%).

Serious Violent Crime. During the 1997-98 school year, approximately 10 percent of schools and 11 percent of students experienced one or more incidents of any type of serious violent crime. These levels of crime are about one-sixth the levels of less serious violent crime and property crime. Seven percent of schools reported to police one or more incidents of physical attack or fight with a weapon; 6 percent of schools reported one or more incidents of robbery.[2]

Four percent of students were robbed of less than $1, and 6 percent were robbed of more than $1. Approximately 5 percent were threatened with a gun or knife.

Approximately four percent of middle and senior high school teachers experienced one or more incidents of any type of serious violent crime during the 1997-98 school year. These teachers were attacked and received minor injuries (3%), attacked and received injuries that required a doctor (0.7%), and confronted by weapons at school (0.5%).

Middle Schools Experience More Problem Behavior than Other Schools

Middle schools experienced higher levels of some types of problem behavior than elementary schools or high schools. Compared with elementary schools and high schools, a higher percentage of middle schools reported to police one or more incidents of physical attack or fight with a

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[2] Robbery differs from theft in that it entails the use or threat of violence or force.

Figure 2-2. Percentage of students reporting one or more incidents of personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year

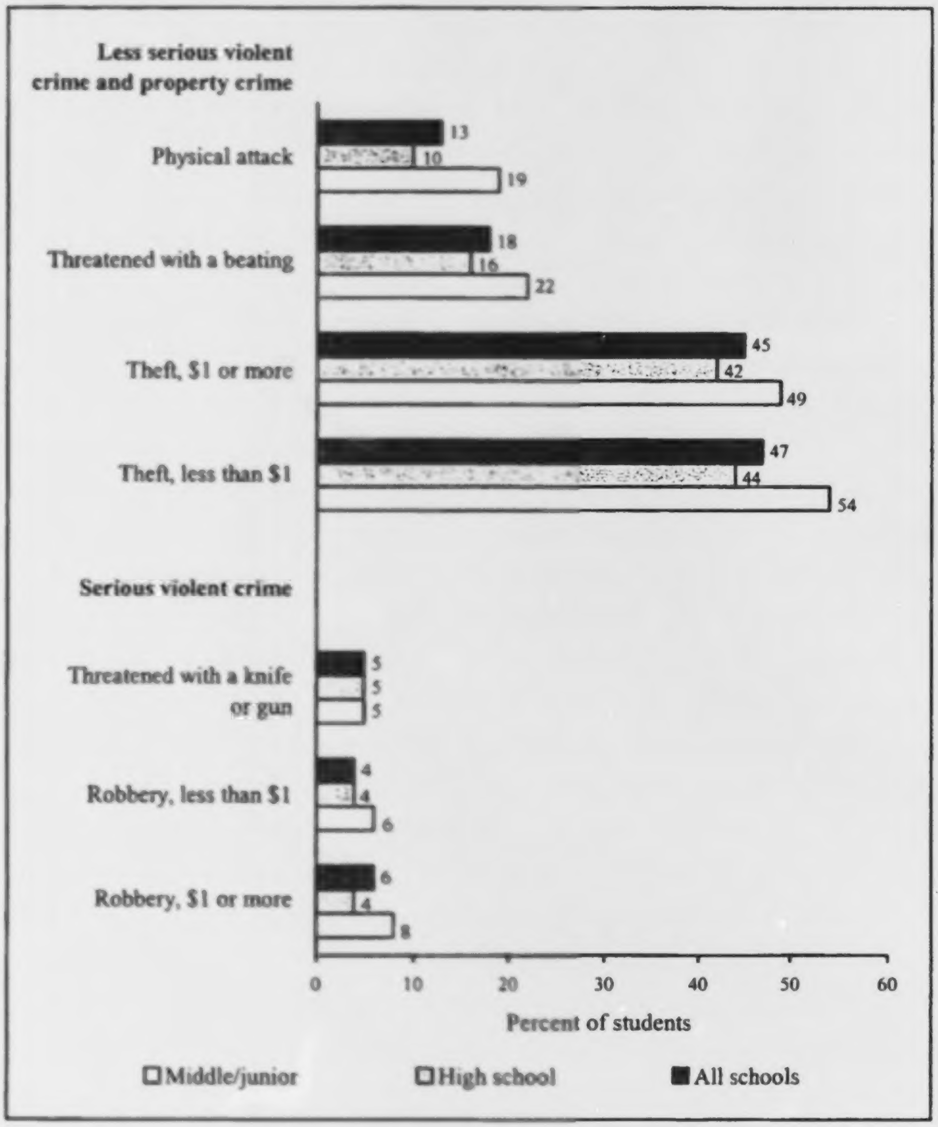
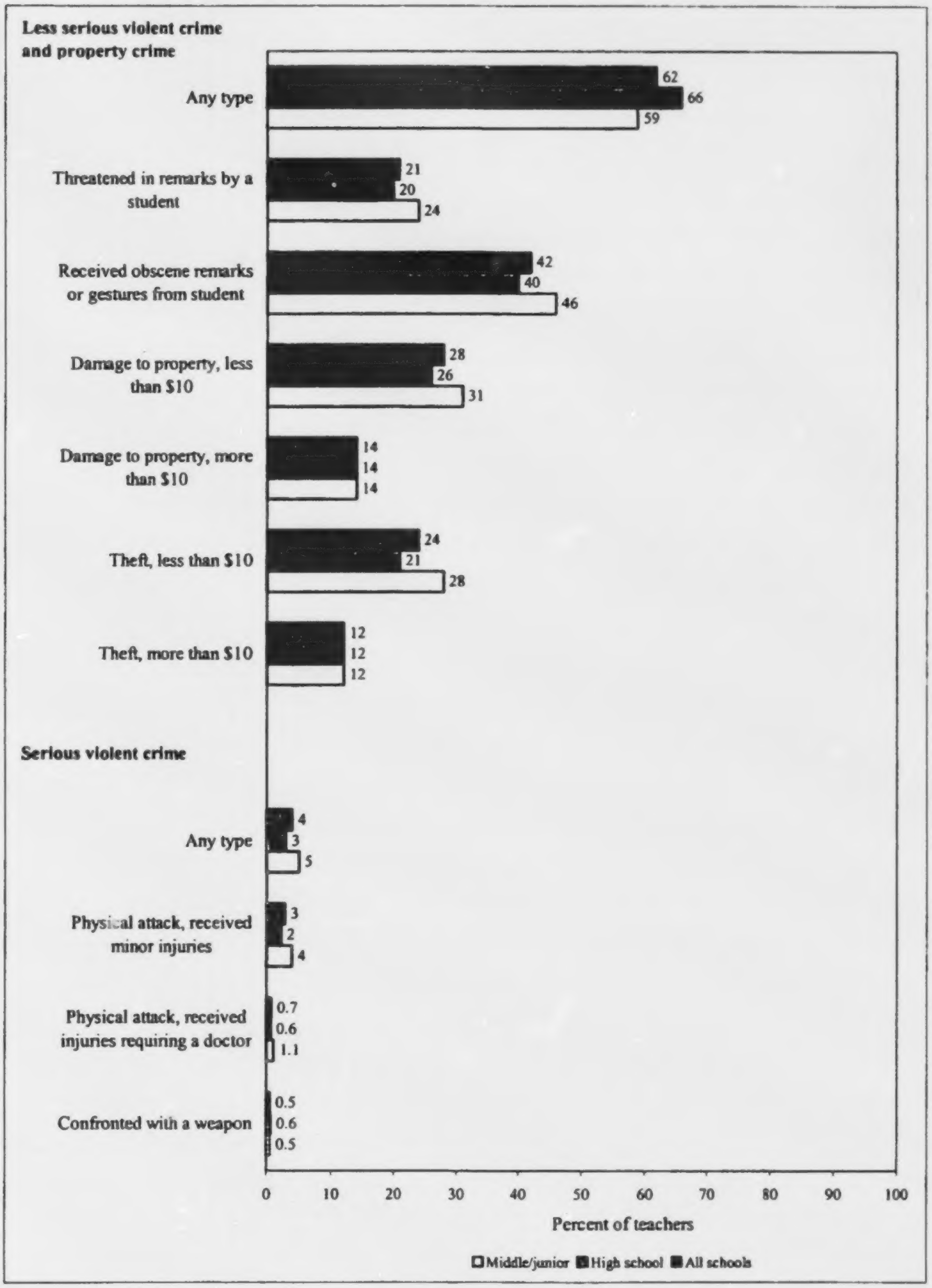


Figure 2-3. Percentage of teachers reporting one or more incidents of personal victimization this year in school -- 1997-98 school year



weapon (21% of middle schools versus 2% of elementary schools and 11% of high schools).[3] A higher percentage of middle schools also reported one or more incidents of fighting without a weapon (72% of middle schools versus 56% of high schools and 34% of elementary schools).

A slightly higher percentage of middle school students than high school students were the victims of robbery during the 1997-98 school year. For example, 8 percent of middle school students were robbed of $1 or more in school, compared with 4 percent of high school students. Additionally, for all types of less serious violent crime and property crime, a higher percentage of middle school students than high school students reported being victimized. For example, 19 percent of middle school students were physically attacked in school, compared with 10 percent of high school students.

For some types of less serious violent crime and property crime, the percentage of teachers that were victimized during the 1997-98 school year was higher for middle schools than high schools. A higher percentage of middle school teachers than high school teachers received obscene remarks or gestures from a student (46% of middle school teachers versus 40% of high school teachers) and experienced damage to personal property worth less than $10 (31% of middle school teachers versus 26% of high school teachers). Middle school teachers also were more likely than high school teachers to be threatened by a student (24% of middle school teachers and 20% of high school teachers).

Students and Teachers Generally Feel Safe at School

Approximately 24 percent of students and teachers in middle and senior high schools would avoid one or more places at school out of fear that someone might bother or hurt them there. As many as 12 percent of students would avoid a specific place at school (e.g., locker room). By way of comparison, 16 percent of students would avoid a place in their neighborhood other than the street where they live.

Approximately 27 percent of teachers in middle and senior high schools rated one or more places at school other than their classrooms (especially locker rooms or gym, and rest rooms) as relatively unsafe. They did feel that their classrooms were quite safe. Perceptions of safety, however, appear to be unrelated to student misbehavior in classrooms: 27 percent of teachers in middle and senior high schools

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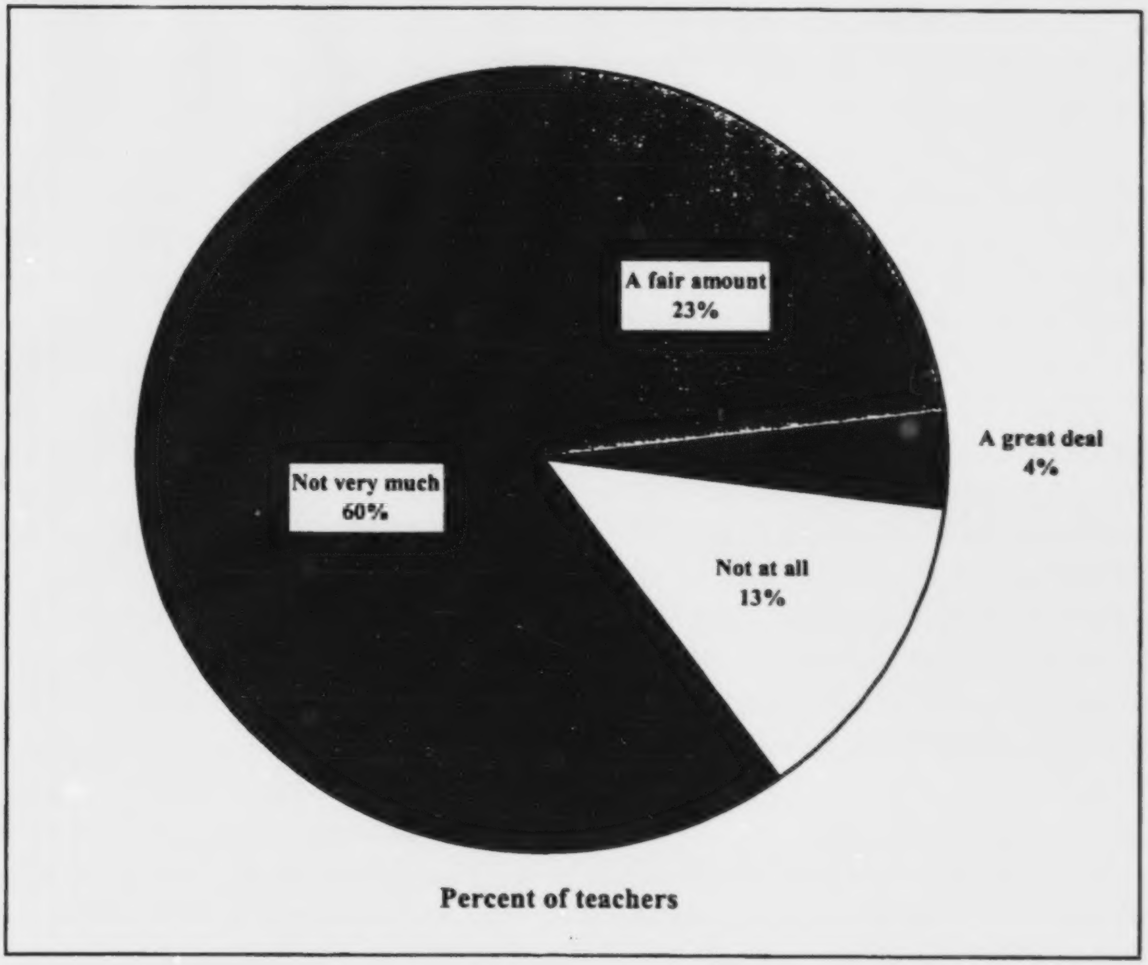
[3] Findings based on principal reports indicating that middle schools have higher levels of some types of school crime than high schools are inconsistent with results from the NCES Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence (Heaviside, Rowand, Williams & Farris, 1998), which is also based on principal reports. These inconsistencies could be due to several methodological differences between the studies, including the universe of schools selected and the response rates achieved.

Figure 2-4. Percentage of teachers reporting on the extent to which student behavior prevents them from teaching -- 1997-1998 school year



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reported that the behavior of some students keeps them from teaching a fair amount or great deal of the time. (See Figure 2-4.)

Problem Schools: Characteristics and Problem Behavior

To increase understanding of the characteristics and dynamics of schools with the greatest safety concerns, we identified the middle schools and high schools that had the highest levels of serious violent crime (robbery and physical attack or fight with a weapon) among schools in our national probability sample. We selected a school for this analysis if its principal indicated that incidents of serious violent crime reported to the police exceeded 2 per 1,000 students.[4] This level of crime in schools is substantially higher than we found nationally (on average, 1.5 incidents per 1,000 students for middle schools and 0.9 incidents per 1000 students for high schools); it also is approximately twice the level of serious violent crime detected in the study of Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97 (Heaviside et. al., 1998). The middle schools in the analysis account for approximately 16 percent of middle schools nationally; the high schools account for approximately 8 percent of high schools nationally.

In this section and in each of the remaining chapters, we contrast the problem schools with all of the other schools at the same instructional level on their characteristics, problem behavior, types of prevention activities in operation, quality of prevention programming, and prevention planning. For these comparisons, we conducted tests of statistical significance of the observed differences between the problem schools and other schools. First, we examine the characteristics of the problem schools and the patterns of problem behavior that we found.

Characteristics. Problem schools identified based on the principal reports were very similar to other schools on several characteristics. These characteristics include the percentage of schools that were in urban, suburban and rural locations, and the number of students enrolled. (See Figure 2-5.) The problem schools and other schools also were similar on the percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. (See Figure 2-6.) Although the problem high schools were similar to (i.e.,

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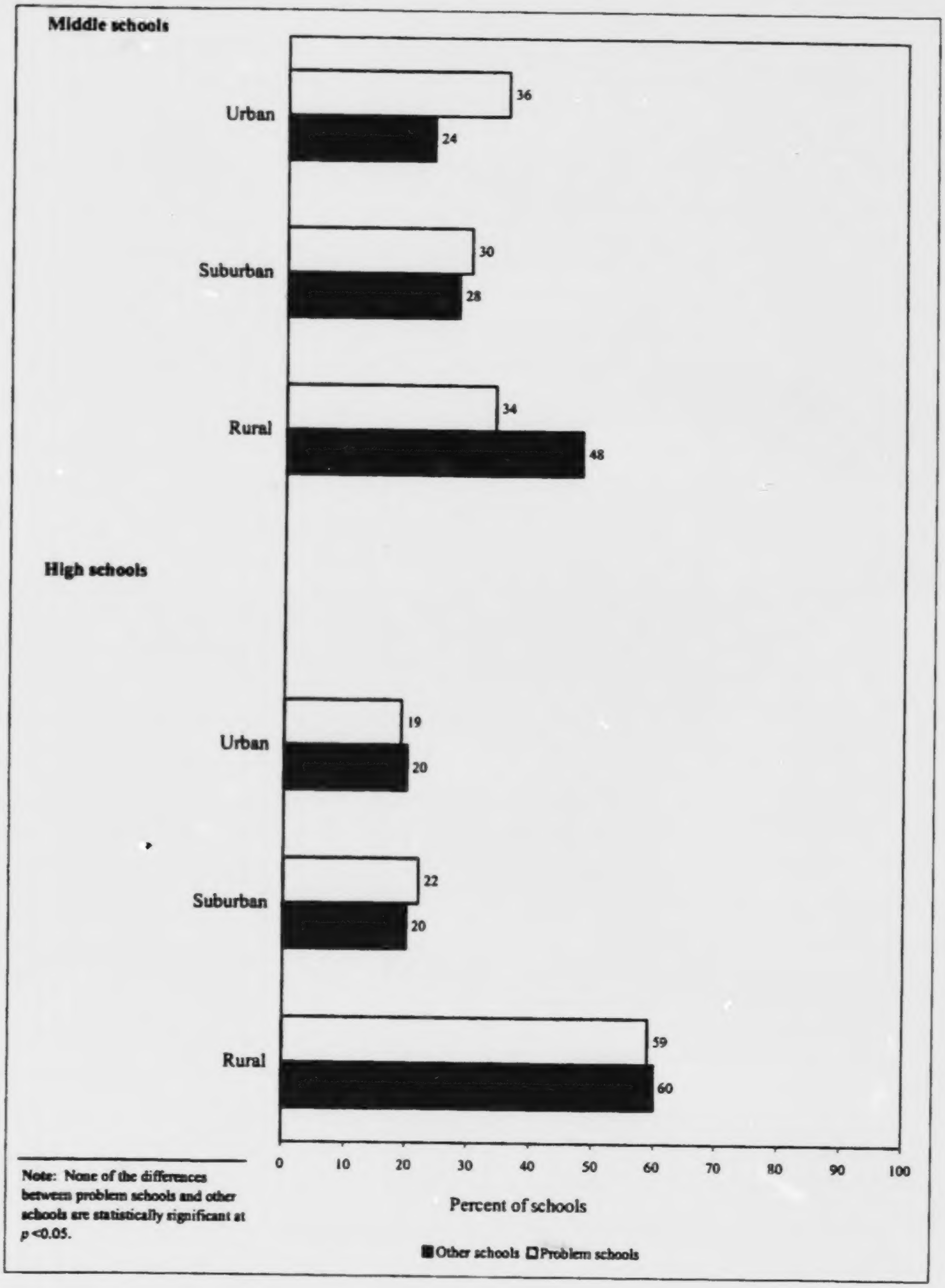
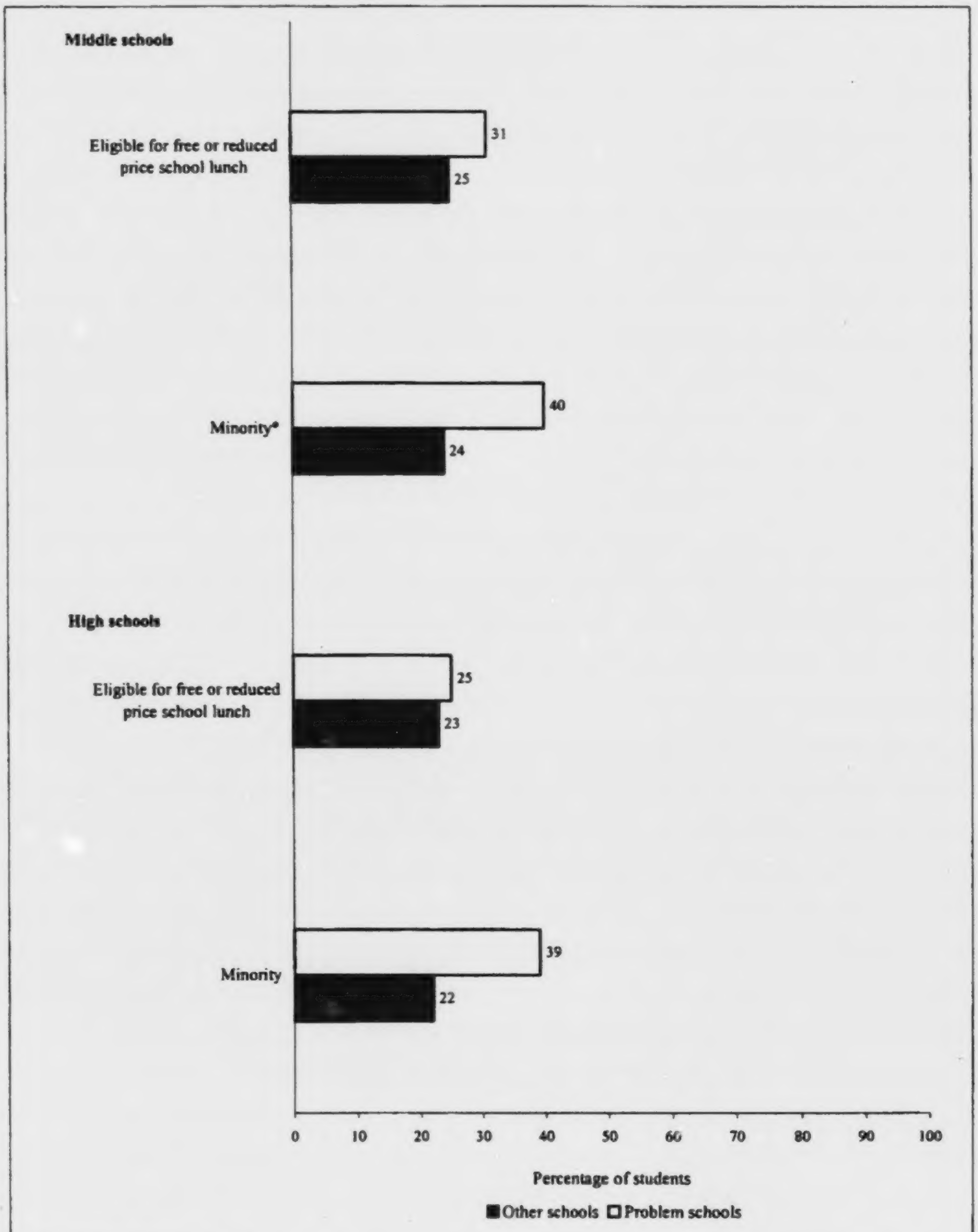
[4] We had considered identifying the problem schools using combinations of principal, student, and teacher reports. However, those different types of reports were only weakly associated with one another. While they are imperfect, we chose to use the principal reports because they were more likely to capture incidents of serious violent crime than the other types of reports.

Figure 2-5. Characteristics of problem schools and other schools – 1997-98 school year



Note: None of the differences between problem schools and other schools are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Figure 2-6. Characteristics of students in problem schools and other schools – 1997-98 school year



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*Difference between problem schools and other schools is statistically significant at p <0.05. None of the other differences are significant at that level.

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not statistically different from) the other high schools on the percentage of minority students, the problem middle schools had a higher percentage of minority students (40%) than other middle schools (24%).[5]

Problem Behavior. For practically all types of crime reported by the principal to the police, the problem schools had higher levels of crime than other schools. This is true for middle schools and high schools. (See Figure 2-7 and Figure 2-8.) The differences are greatest on serious violent crime by definition. (We identified the problem schools using principal reports of violent crime.) For example, 100 percent of problem middle schools experienced one or more incidents of any type of serious violent crime compared with 15 percent of other schools. However, we also found higher levels of less serious violent crime and property crime for the problem schools than for other schools. For example, 98 percent of problem middle schools experienced one or more incidents of any type of less serious violent crime and property crime compared with 82 percent of other schools. The only exception is that problem middle schools and other middle schools were similar (statistically) on vandalism.

The problem high schools were similar overall to the other high schools on the percentage of students who experienced crimes at school. For the problem middle schools, the exceptions are that higher percentages of students experienced one or more incidents of any type of serious violent crime (16% for problem schools versus 13% for other schools) and of robbery of $1 or more (10% for problem schools versus 7% for other schools). (See Figure 2-9.) We found no differences between the problem high schools and other schools on less serious violent crime and property crime. (See Figure 2-10.) However, the pattern, especially for serious violent crime, suggests that students in problem schools may experience higher levels of crime.

Students attending problem high schools were similar to students attending other high schools in terms of feeling unsafe in one or more school locations, on the street where they live, and in other parts of their neighborhoods. However, more students attending problem middle schools than other middle schools reported feeling unsafe in one or more school locations and in parts of their neighborhoods.

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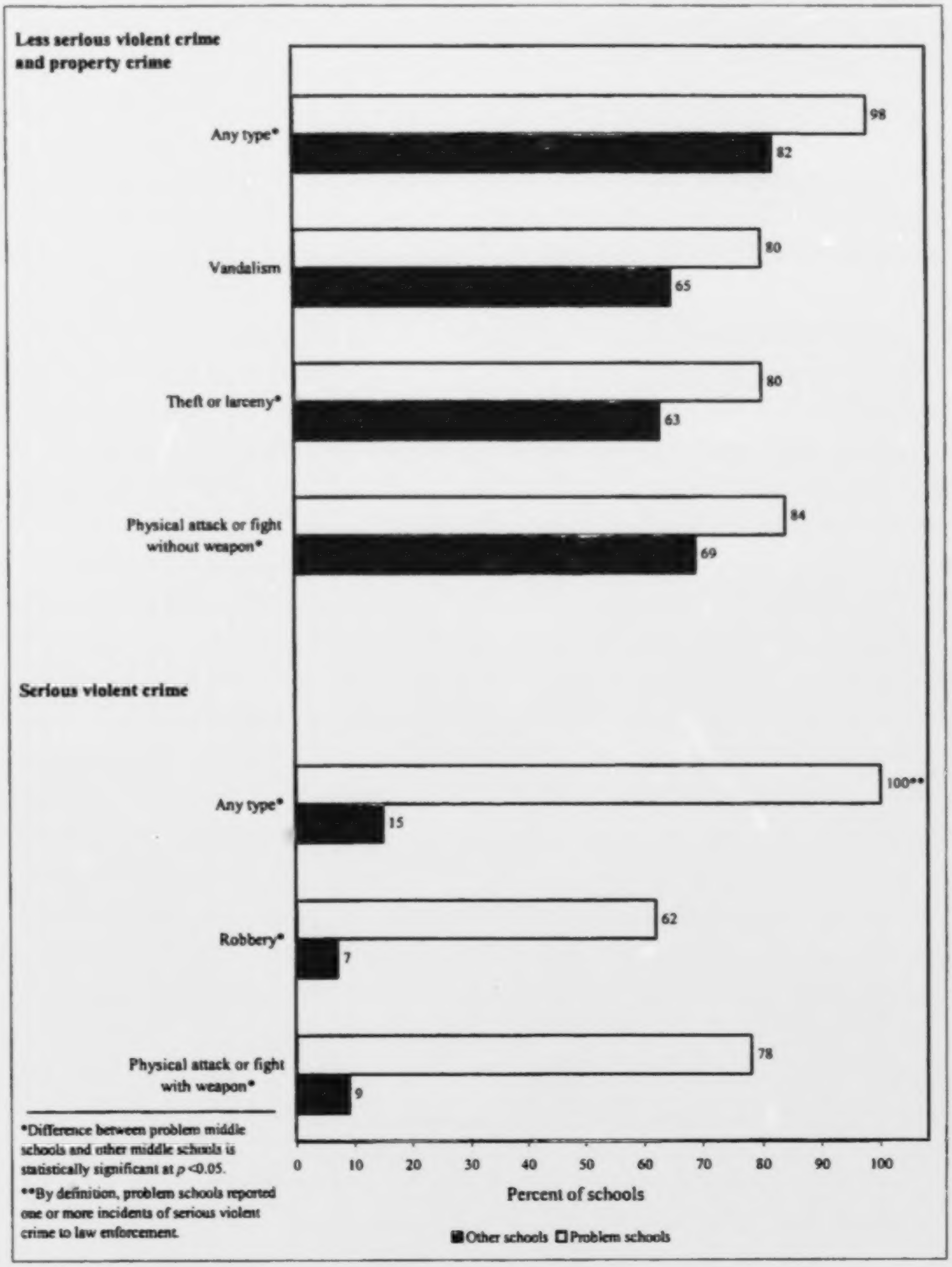
[5] While the percentage-point difference on the percentage of minorities between the problem high schools and other high schools is very close to the difference between the problem middle schools and other high schools, only the latter difference is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. This occurred because the variability among high schools on percentage of minorities was substantially higher for the high schools than for the middle schools. The small number of schools in the problem school analysis contributed to the variability.

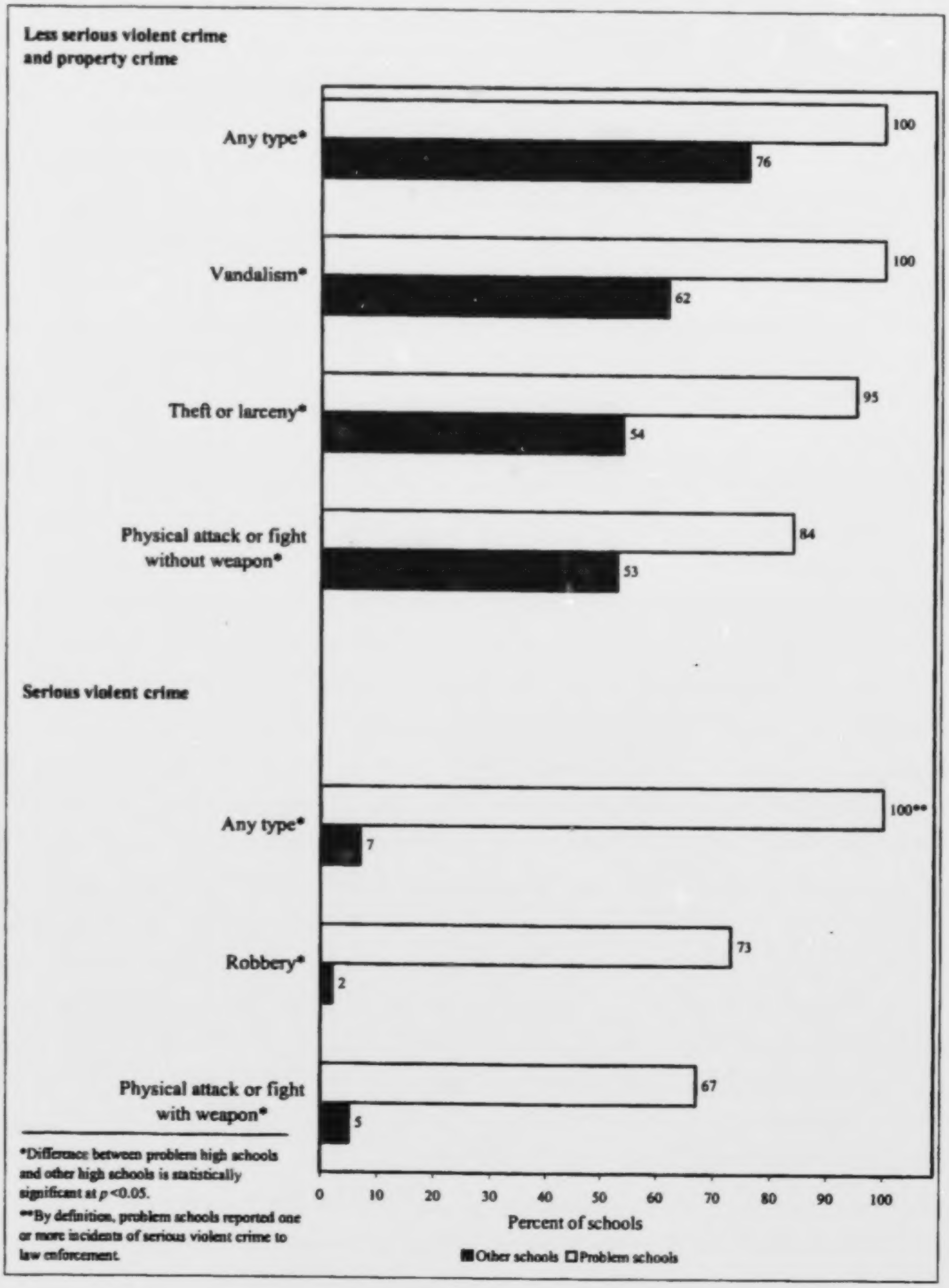
Figure 2-7. Percentage of problem middle schools and other middle schools reporting one or more incidents of crime to law enforcement – 1997-98 school year



*Difference between problem middle schools and other middle schools is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

**By definition, problem schools reported one or more incidents of serious violent crime to law enforcement.

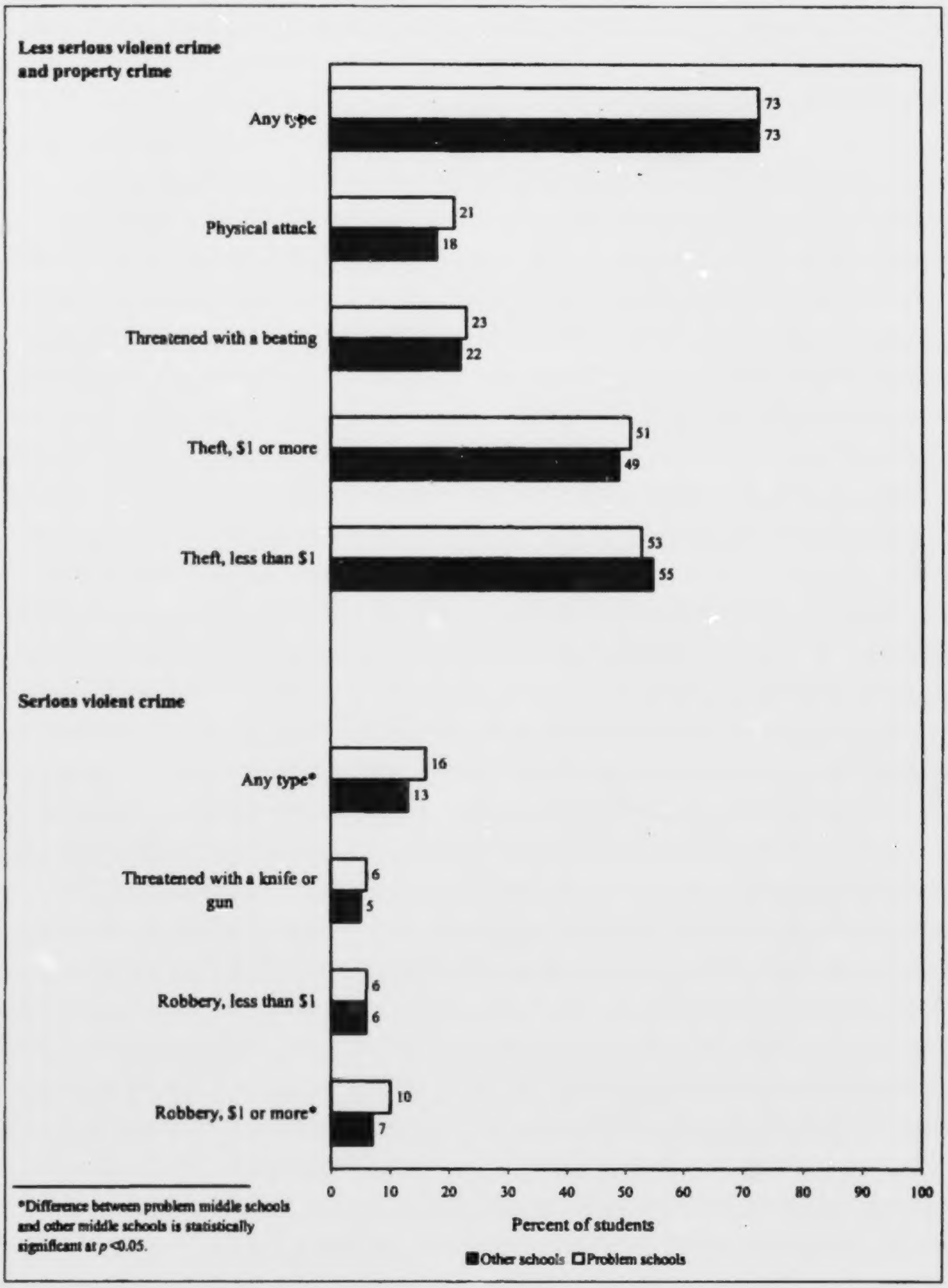
Figure 2-8. Percentage of problem high schools and other high schools reporting one or more incidents of crime to law enforcement -- 1997-98 school year



*Difference between problem high schools and other high schools is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

**By definition, problem schools reported one or more incidents of serious violent crime to law enforcement.

Figure 2-9. Percentage of students in problem middle schools and other middle schools reporting personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year



*Difference between problem middle schools and other middle schools is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

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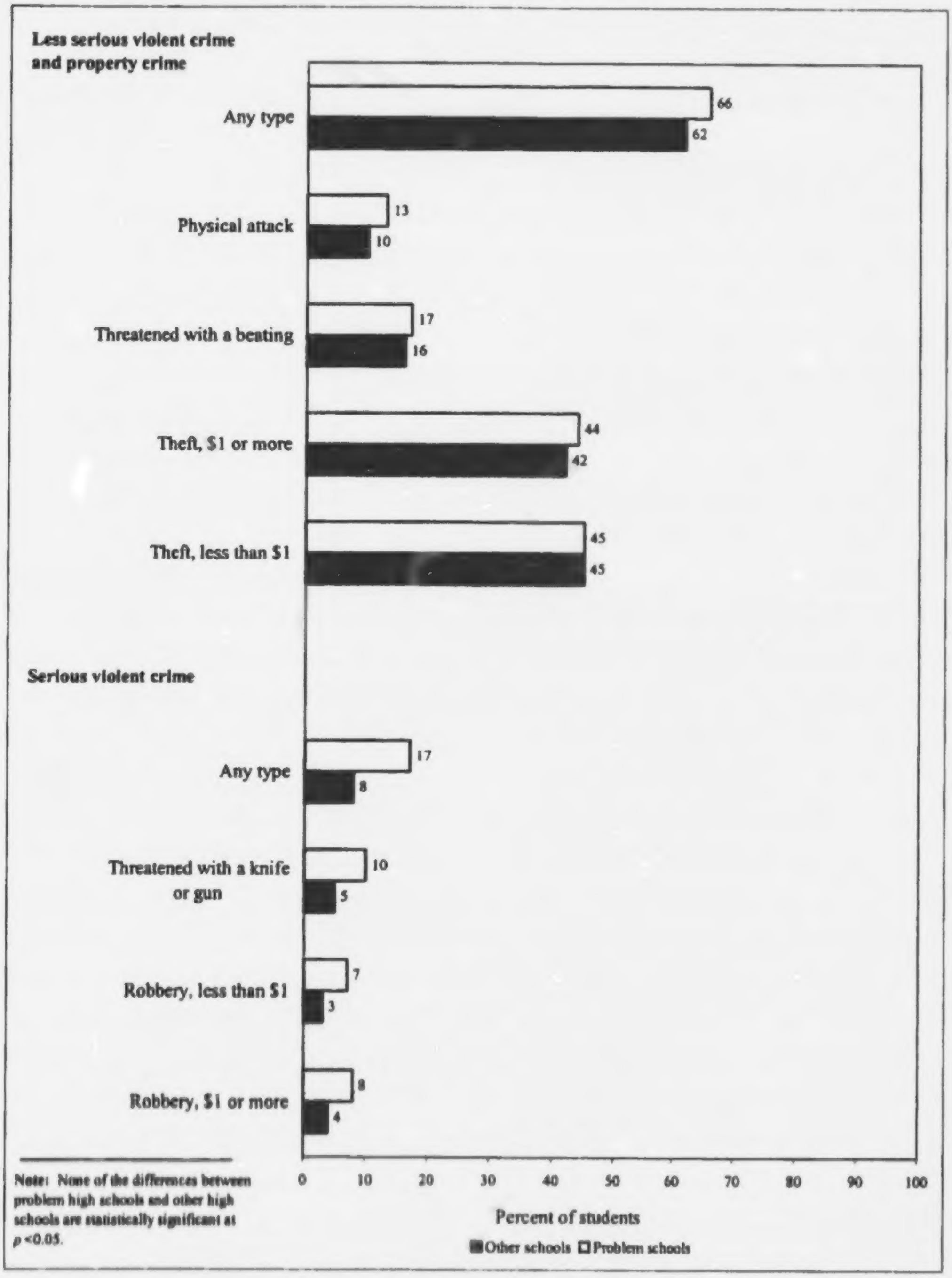
Figure 2-10. **Percentage of students in problem high schools and other high schools reporting personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year**



Note: None of the differences between problem high schools and other high schools are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Teachers in problem middle schools experience more crime and feel more unsafe than teachers in other middle schools. (See Figure 2-11.) For example, a higher percentage of teachers in problem middle schools than other middle schools experienced damage to and theft of their personal property. Teachers in problem middle schools were also more likely to receive obscene remarks or gestures or be threatened by a student. In addition, a higher percentage of teachers in problem middle schools compared with other middle schools reported having a weapon pulled on them and experiencing one or more incidents of serious violent crime. Finally, middle schools teachers in problem schools more often reported feeling unsafe in one or more places in their school, and a higher percentage indicated that the amount of problem behavior in their class prevented them from teaching. The problem high schools were similar overall to the other high schools on the percentage of teachers who experienced crimes at school. (See Figure 2-12.)

Figure 2-11. Percentage of teachers in problem middle schools and other middle schools reporting personal victimization this year in school — 1997-98 school year

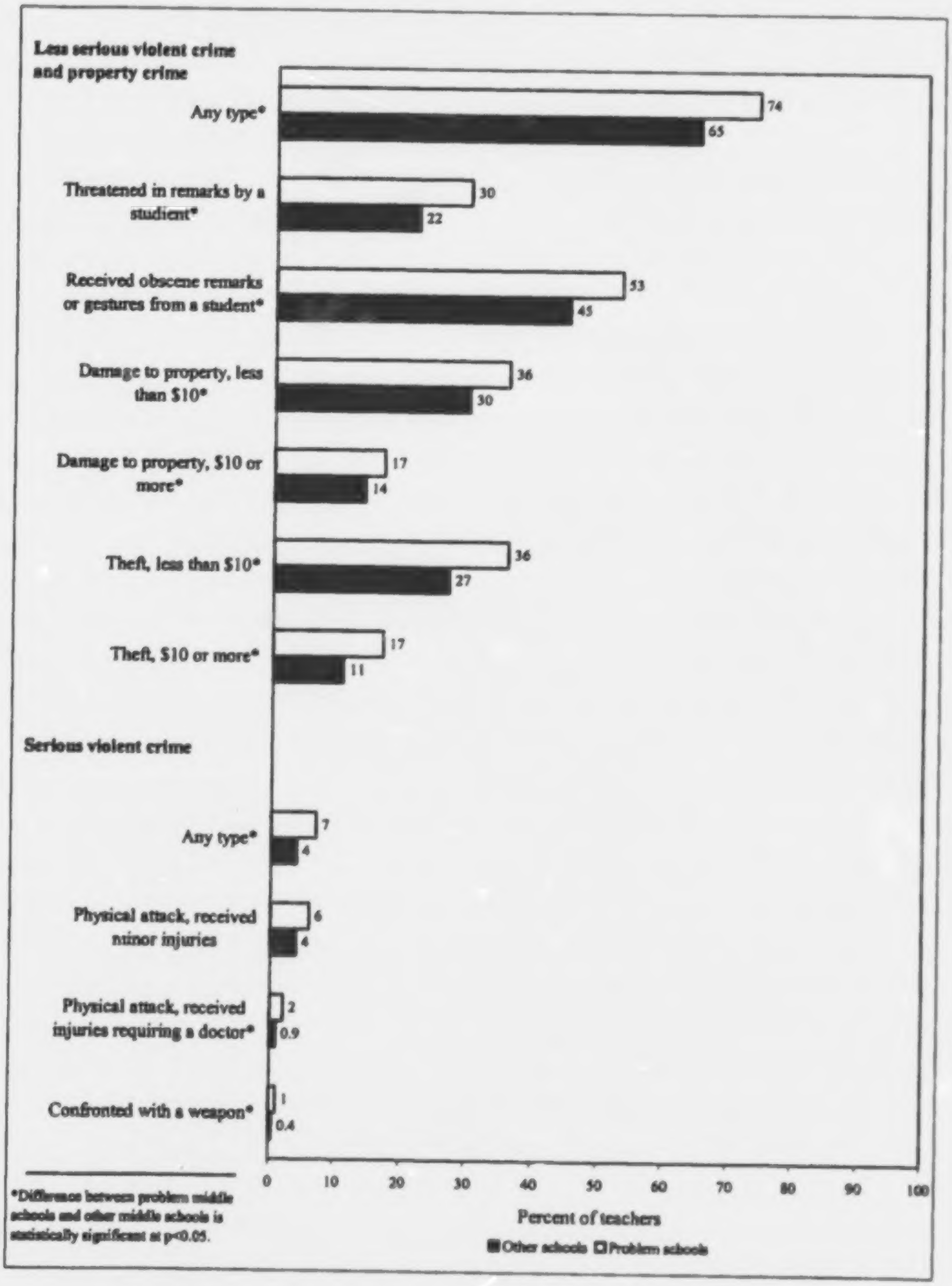
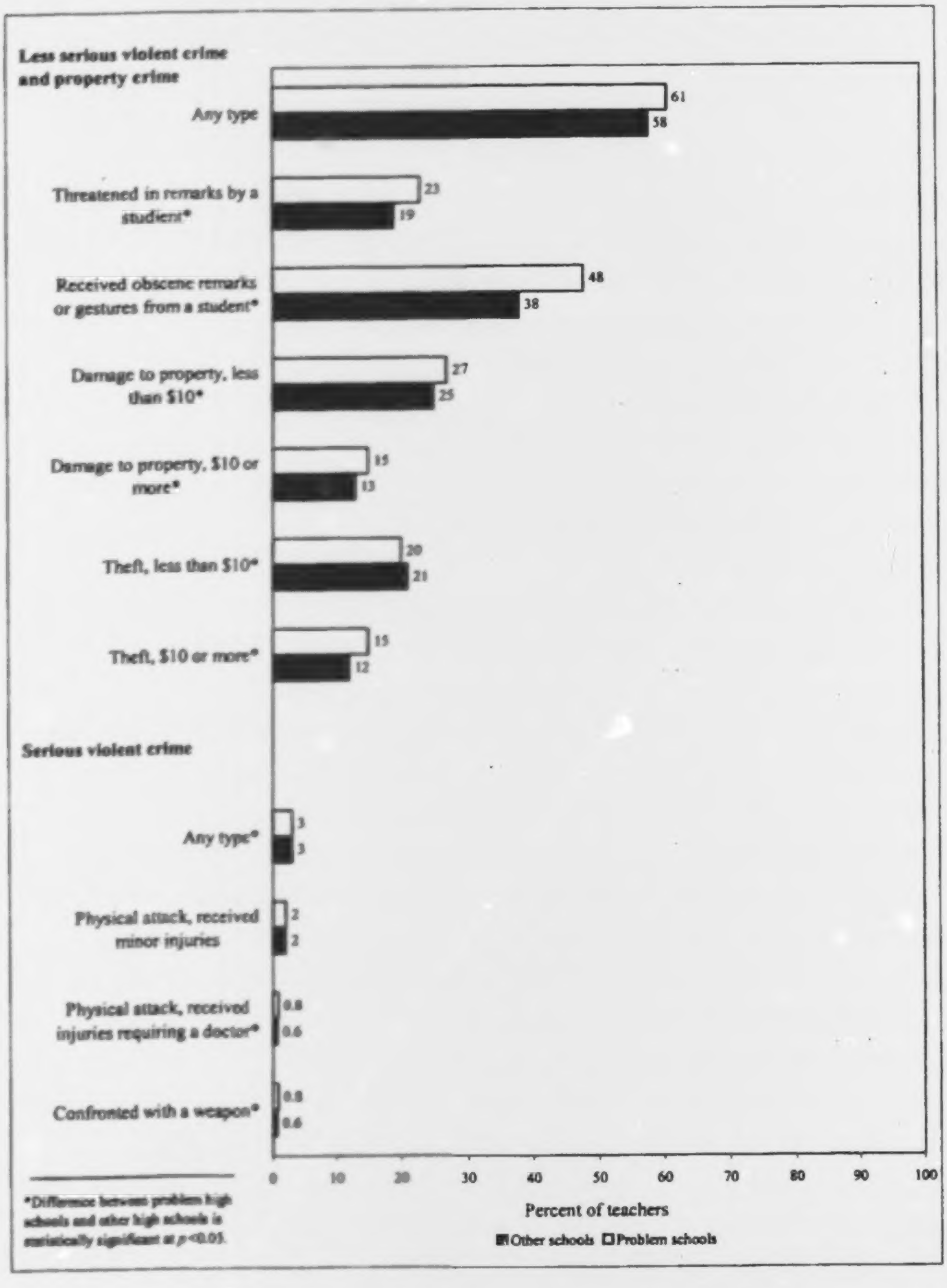


Figure 2-12. Percentage of teachers in problem high schools and other high schools reporting personal victimization this year in school – 1997-98 school year



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3. EFFORTS TO PREVENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS

Schools are implementing a great number and variety of prevention activities. In addition, most schools are communicating school rules to students, and schools are monitoring and recording violations of school rules. Schools also use a variety of responses to desirable and undesirable student behavior. Schools perform best on communication and documentation of school rules and on tracking student behavior. They need the most improvement on the range of responses that they make to student conduct and on maintaining predictable and consistent discipline.

This chapter is based on the results of the screener survey of principals in our national probability sample of schools. Middle school and high school principals reported on whether or not they were implementing in their schools any of 14 types of school prevention activities. (See Table 3-1.) They also reported on whether or not they were using any of five types of school-wide arrangements, such as activities that influence the composition of their schools. (See Table 3-2.) Finally, the principals provided information on the approaches they adopted to communicating and enforcing school rules and to monitoring and tracking student behavior. We report the results in terms of the percentage of schools nationally that implement different types of prevention activities and that adopt certain other practices; we also report findings on the numbers of activities that schools implement nationally.

Schools Are Implementing a Wide Variety of Prevention Activities

Principals reported using highly diverse prevention activities within the 14 types of activities. However, schools used some types of activities much more frequently than they did other types.

Categories of School Activities. The most commonly used category of school activities according to principals is prevention curriculum, instruction, or training. Nationally, 76 percent of schools report using activities in this category to prevent problem behavior and/or promote orderliness in school. (See Figure 3-1.) This prevention activity is followed in frequency of use by counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic services (74%) and use of external personnel resources in classrooms (76%). More than 60 percent of schools also report using culture, climate, or norm change; behavior programming or behavior modification; recreation, enrichment, or leisure activities; and improvements to instructional practices.

Table 3-1. Prevention activity categories and definitions

Prevention activity category	Definition
Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training	Training or instruction in which the content involves knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values intended to prevent problem behavior. Instruction or training may be brief (less than an hour) or of an extended duration.
Counseling, social work, or psychological and therapeutic interventions	Provision of advice or guidance to remedy or prevent problems using identifiable techniques of psychology, counseling, or social work.
Use of external personnel resources in classrooms	Includes the use of parent or community volunteers, authority figures (e.g., police officers), classroom consultants, aides, or older students.
Culture or climate change, norm change	Includes efforts to establish, encourage, or sustain a special school climate or culture though symbols, ceremonies, or systematic procedures; communication of expectations; and use of social influence or attitude change techniques to obtain commitment to norms.
Behavioral or behavior modification interventions	Tracking student behavior, setting behavior goals, and feedback or punishment to decrease undesired behavior or rewards to increase desired behavior.
Recreational, enrichment, and leisure activities	Provision of, or access to, activities, play, amusement, or diversions; exploration outside the school; for fun or relaxation.
Improvements to classroom organization and management	Activities applied to entire classes to establish and enforce classroom rules, use rewards and punishments, improve the use or management of time, or change the way in which students are grouped for instruction by ability, achievement, or effort within the classroom.
Services to families	Outreach or service to families to improve their child management and supervision practices or to provide other family services.
Mentoring, tutoring, coaching, or apprenticeships	Provision of one-on-one attention to students other than counseling or behavioral programming.

Table 3-1. Prevention activity categories and definitions (continued)

Prevention activity category	Definition
Improvements to instructional practices	Activities applied to entire classes that involve the adoption or expansion of improved instructional techniques or practices. Includes training, supervision, or assistance to improve instructional methods. Not included are curriculum changes.
Intergroup relations, interaction between school and community	Activities to promote interaction among members of diverse groups and celebrate diversity, to promote relations between the school and the community, and improve intergroup relations or resolve or reduce conflict.
Youth roles in regulating and responding to student conduct	Student participation in making school rules, in resolving disputes, or in responding to problem behavior (e.g., student court, peer mediation, or student conflict resolution).
Planning structure or process	Structured or facilitated planning activities, as well as activity to coordinate or manage change in the school. Includes the use of methods or processes for planning or program development, inclusion of a broad range of individuals or perspectives in planning, or the use of consultants to advise on school practices or solve problems.
Security and surveillance	Application of procedures to make it difficult for intruders to enter the school; watching entrances, hallways and school grounds; making it easier to report problem behavior; searching for weapons or drugs; removing barriers to observation or inspection; action to avert potential unsafe events.

A higher percentage of middle schools than high schools used each one of the following nine prevention categories: (1) prevention curriculum, instruction, or training; (2) counseling, social work, psychological and therapeutic interventions; (3) culture or climate change, norm change; (4) behavioral or behavior modification interventions; (5) improvements to classroom organization and management; (6) services to families; (7) intergroup relations, interaction between school and community; (8) youth roles in regulating and responding to student conduct; and (9) planning structure or process.

Table 3-2. School-wide arrangements and definitions

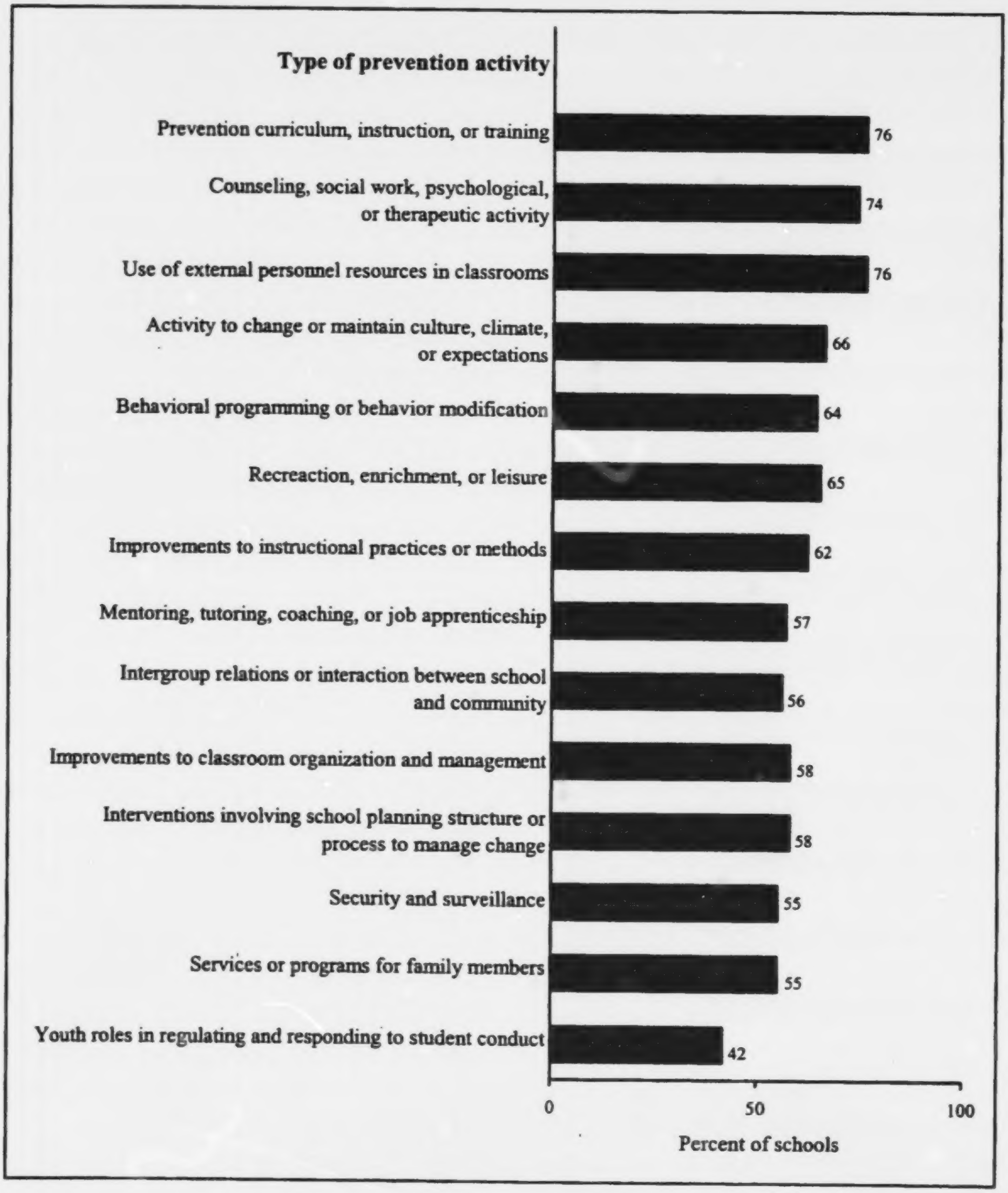
School-wide arrangement	Definitions
Simple provision of information regarding the harmfulness of violence, drug use, or risky sexual behavior, or about the availability of services	Information may be provided by using posters, newsletters, brochures, announcements, handouts, videos, slide shows, lectures, presentations, readings, or other methods. Information may be directed at students, parents, educators, or community members. Does not include instruction or training. Does not include information conveyed as part of any activity listed above.
Reorganization of grades, classes, or school schedules	Include use of specially arranged school schedules, group of students, formation of within-school units, or small class size to prevent problem behavior or promote school order. May also include within-school units such as "houses" or teams or special grade-to-grade promotion criteria.
Activities that influence the composition of the school's population	Include special student recruitment efforts, school specialization in attractive educational programs, selective admissions criteria, scholarships, assignment of students with educational or behavior problems to other schools, or a requirement of tuition or fees.
Treatment or prevention interventions for administration, faculty, or staff	Include prevention or treatment of alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use, anger or self-control problems, or other health or mental health problems.
Architectural design or structural features of the school	Include the use of fences, space, facilities, barricades, physical arrangements, or artwork.

School-wide Arrangements. The most common type of school-wide prevention activity is simple provision of information. (A figure with details on the frequency of school-wide arrangement is not shown.) More than 80 percent of schools in the nation provide isolated information about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs as one of their prevention activities. More than 75 percent of middle school principals and 71 percent of high school principals also report providing isolated information on violence, compared with only 56 percent of elementary school principals.

For middle and high schools, the most common organizational strategy was mixing students of differing conduct or abilities (67% overall). This strategy was followed by decreasing class sizes (32%), grouping students by ability or achievement (30%), using stringent criteria for grade-to-grade promotion (30%), and by assigning them to grade-level "houses" or teams (25%). Although equivalent proportions of middle schools and high schools used the other categories, middle schools adopted the use

48

Figure 3-1. Percentage of schools using each type of prevention activity – 1997-98 school year



of houses or teams much more often than high schools or elementary schools (66% compared with 15% and 21%, respectively).

Altering the composition of a school is another way to avoid problem behavior or promote orderliness in schools. This approach can mean either that the school is selective in its recruitment or admission, or that the school is a repository for problem children. Middle schools in all urbanicity categories were equivalent on the extent to which schools were the repository of students with problem behavior. However, suburban and urban high schools are much more selective in admitting students to their schools than rural high schools. For example, private schools and public magnet schools can be selective by actively recruiting students or establishing admissions criteria (e.g., good conduct, high test scores or high grades).

Providing treatment or prevention interventions for administration, faculty, or staff is another way schools try to prevent problem behavior and promote orderliness in schools. Forty percent of schools provided drug treatment and prevention services, 27 percent provided anger management or self-control training, and 39 percent provided other health or mental health services. More urban and suburban schools than rural schools use this strategy to prevent problem behavior.

The architectural (design or structural) feature most often used by both middle (68%) and high schools (56%) to prevent problem behavior is cafeteria arrangements. One example of a cafeteria arrangement is using multiple lunch lines to make lines move faster, which may avoid conflicts in line.

Schools Are Using Many Prevention Activities

Schools nationally use an average of 9 prevention **categories** (out of 14). On average, middle schools implement 8 different categories of prevention activities, while high schools use 10 different categories.

Within the 14 prevention categories, the number of separate or **unique activities** or programs within a school reported by principals ranged from 0 to 61. The median number of activities used by schools nationally is 14, with middle schools reporting more activities than high schools. Urban schools also used more activities than suburban or rural schools (although this difference is not statistically significant). Approximately 20 percent of schools used at least 25 unique activities, and 6 percent reported using at least 40 unique activities.

Most Schools Communicate Rules to Students and Monitor and Record Violations of Rules

Establishing and communicating rules is another way that schools attempt to prevent problem behavior. More than 95 percent of schools provide teachers, students, and parents with a copy of the school rules. In addition, 90 percent of all schools communicate rules or consequences via handbooks or posters. More than 90 percent of all schools have written rules regarding time for student arrival at school, drugs, and weapons; more than 80 percent of schools have formal written rules about students leaving the campus, visitor sign-in and registration, and student dress code. More middle schools than high schools (62% compared with 42%) have written rules on carrying items or wearing clothing in which drugs or weapons could be concealed. Only about one-quarter of all schools (public and private schools combined) have rules regarding uniforms; rural schools are least likely to have such a policy.

Monitoring and recording violations of school rules may be as important as having and communicating such rules. Most schools (92%) have records or files on individual students (paper or computer), and 89 percent currently use printed discipline forms, a referral system, or other methods for identifying and recording rule violations when they occur. Eighty percent of schools also have a system for investigating a student's history, performance, or circumstances to help decide what disciplinary action (if any) to impose.

Schools Use a Variety of Responses to Desirable and Undesirable Student Behavior

To promote orderliness, schools use a variety of responses to desirable and undesirable conduct. The most common response to desirable behavior (96%) across all schools is informal recognition or praise (e.g., oral praise), followed by formal recognition or praise (95%), and job or privilege reinforcers (87%) (e.g., allowing students to help the teacher). (See Figure 3-2.) For many of the other responses (e.g., activity reinforcers, social rewards, material rewards, redeemable token reinforcers), fewer high schools than other schools report using these responses to positive behavior.

To prevent problem behavior, schools use many different types of responses to undesirable behavior, but some types are much more common than others are. Several of the responses to negative or undesirable behavior are used by virtually all of the schools in the sample, including notifying parents about student behavior, holding a conference with the student, and holding a conference with parents. Ninety-four percent of schools use brief exclusion of students from attendance in regular classes (e.g., in-school suspension or "cooling off" room), and 93 percent use short-term withdrawal of a privilege (e.g., riding the bus, playground access, participation in athletics, or use of the library). The least common responses are corporal punishment (16%) and Saturday detention (16%).[6] Responses involving the legal system (e.g., charging a student with a crime and court action against student or parent) are more often used in middle schools, perhaps because problem behavior is more prevalent at the middle-school level. The use of various practices varies little by urbanicity. However, compared with urban and suburban locations, corporal punishment is more likely to be used in rural areas.

Nearly all schools suspend or expel students, though schools differ on the types of offenses that warrant this extreme disciplinary response to problem behavior. The majority of schools suspend or expel students for possession of a gun (97%), drugs (96%), alcohol (91%), or a knife (91%). Less common but still prevalent are suspensions or expulsions for physical fighting (78%), possession of tobacco (70%), and use of profane or abusive language (52%). It is more common in middle schools than in high schools to suspend or expel students for fighting or possession of tobacco.

Schools Are Following Best Practices and Policies on School Rules and on Tracking Student Behavior but Need Improvement on the Range of Responses to Student Conduct and on Predictable and Consistent Discipline

Based on ratings of school practices in five areas (i.e., communication and documentation, range of appropriate responses to misconduct, range of responses to desirable conduct, disciplinarian consistency, and disciplinary decisionmaking), we found that 93 percent of all schools are following best practices for communication and documentation of school rules and for keeping track of student behavior. (For an explanation of best practices ratings for the five measures of school-wide discipline practices, see Appendix B.)

However, few schools received a rating of following best practices under the other four categories. For the range of appropriate responses to misconduct and range of appropriate responses to

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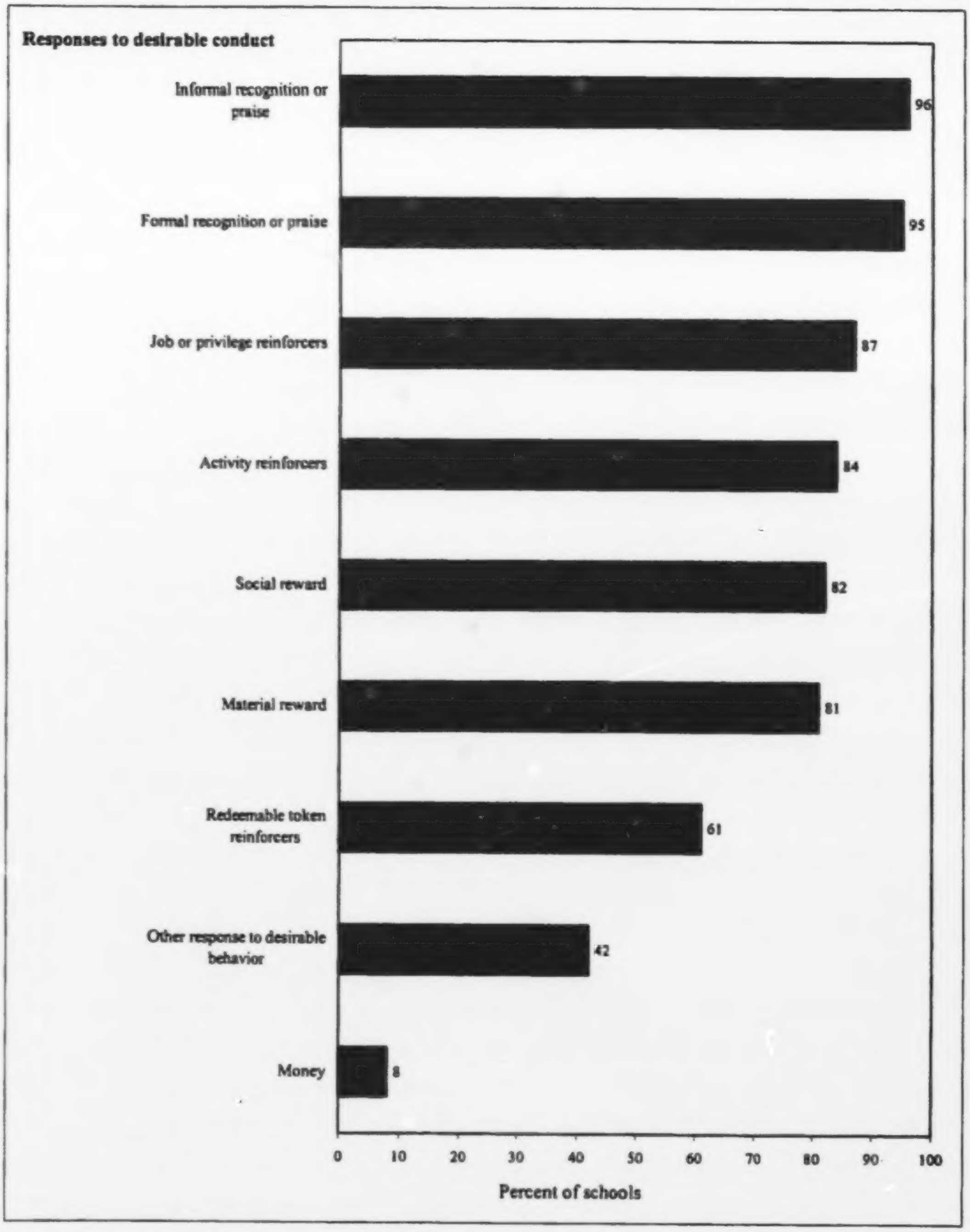
[6] According to the Center for Effective Discipline, approximately one-third of students nationally are enrolled in public schools that permit corporal punishment (Corporal Punishment, 2000).

Figure 3-2. Percentage of schools using specific responses to desirable student conduct – 1997-98 school year



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desirable conduct, only 27 percent and 20 percent of schools, respectively, are following best practices. This means schools are using only a small percentage of the possible responses available for undesirable and desirable conduct. Only 31 percent of schools in the nation received a rating of following best practices for predictable disciplinary decision making and only 48 percent for consistent discipline.

Problem Schools: Efforts to Prevent Problem Behavior

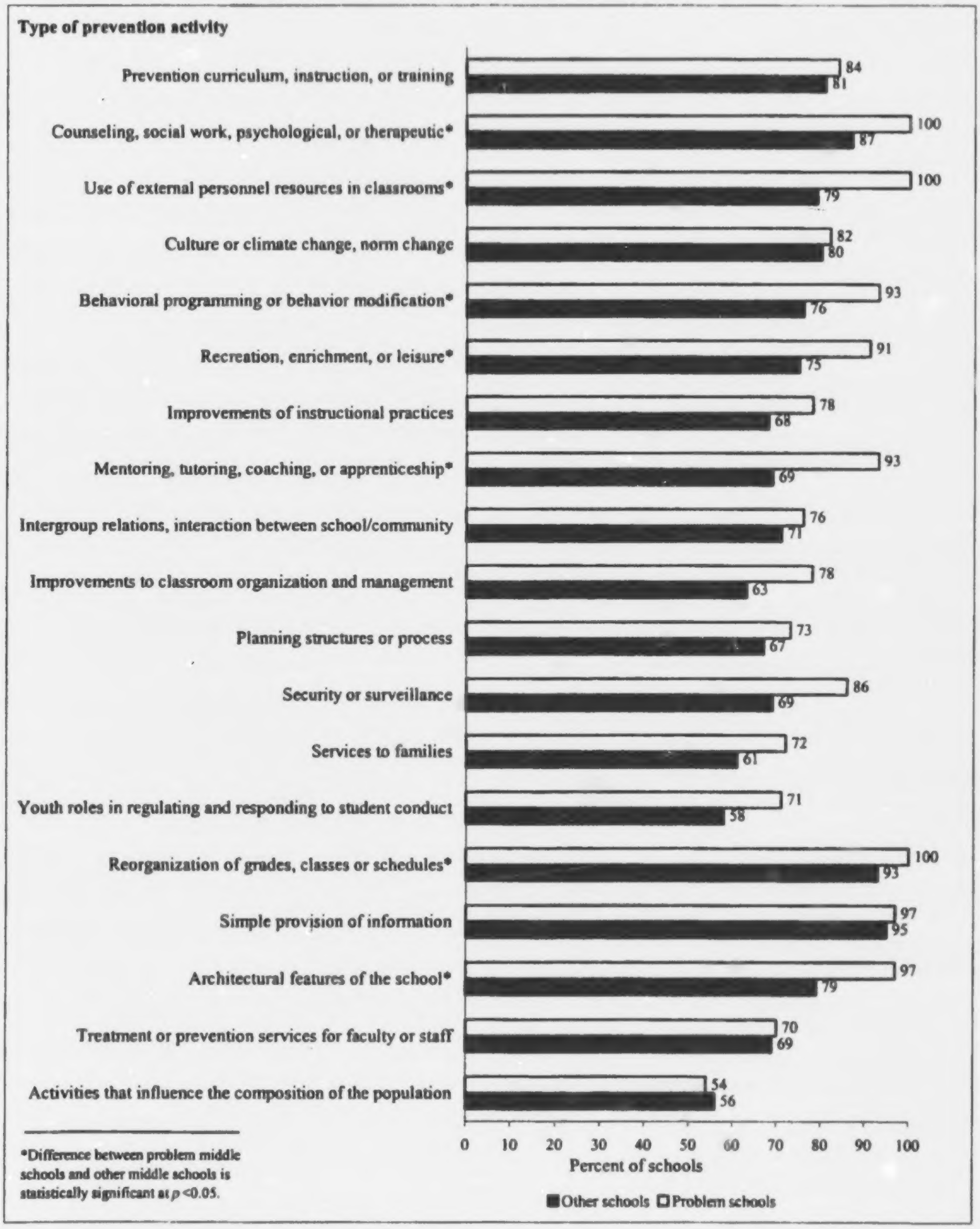
Higher percentages of problem schools (i.e., schools with high levels of serious violent crime as described in Chapter 2) than other schools tended to use several specific types of prevention activities than other schools. Other middle schools tended to use a wider variety of prevention activities than problem middle schools. Overall, problem schools were more likely than other schools to have several different types of school rules.

Type and Amount of Prevention Activity. Although a higher proportion of the problem middle schools use several of the different types of prevention categories, the other middle schools use a significantly higher number of the prevention categories. In other words, other middle schools use a wider variety of activities to reduce negative behavior, while a higher proportion of problem schools use specific types of violence prevention efforts.

A higher percentage of problem middle schools than other middle schools use each of the following types of activities to prevent problem behavior: (1) behavior modification, (2) counseling, social work, or therapeutic activities, (3) mentoring, tutoring, coaching, (4) recreational and enrichment, and (5) use of external personnel resources (such as police officers or other authority figures). (See Figure 3-3.) A similar percentage of problem middle schools and other middle schools use prevention curriculums (84% compared with 81%) and provide simple provision of information (97% compared with 95%). However, a higher percentage of problem middle schools reorganize grades, classes, or school schedules and use architectural features to try to reduce problem behavior. On average, problem middle schools use about six different types of prevention efforts, while other middle schools use approximately eight different types of efforts.

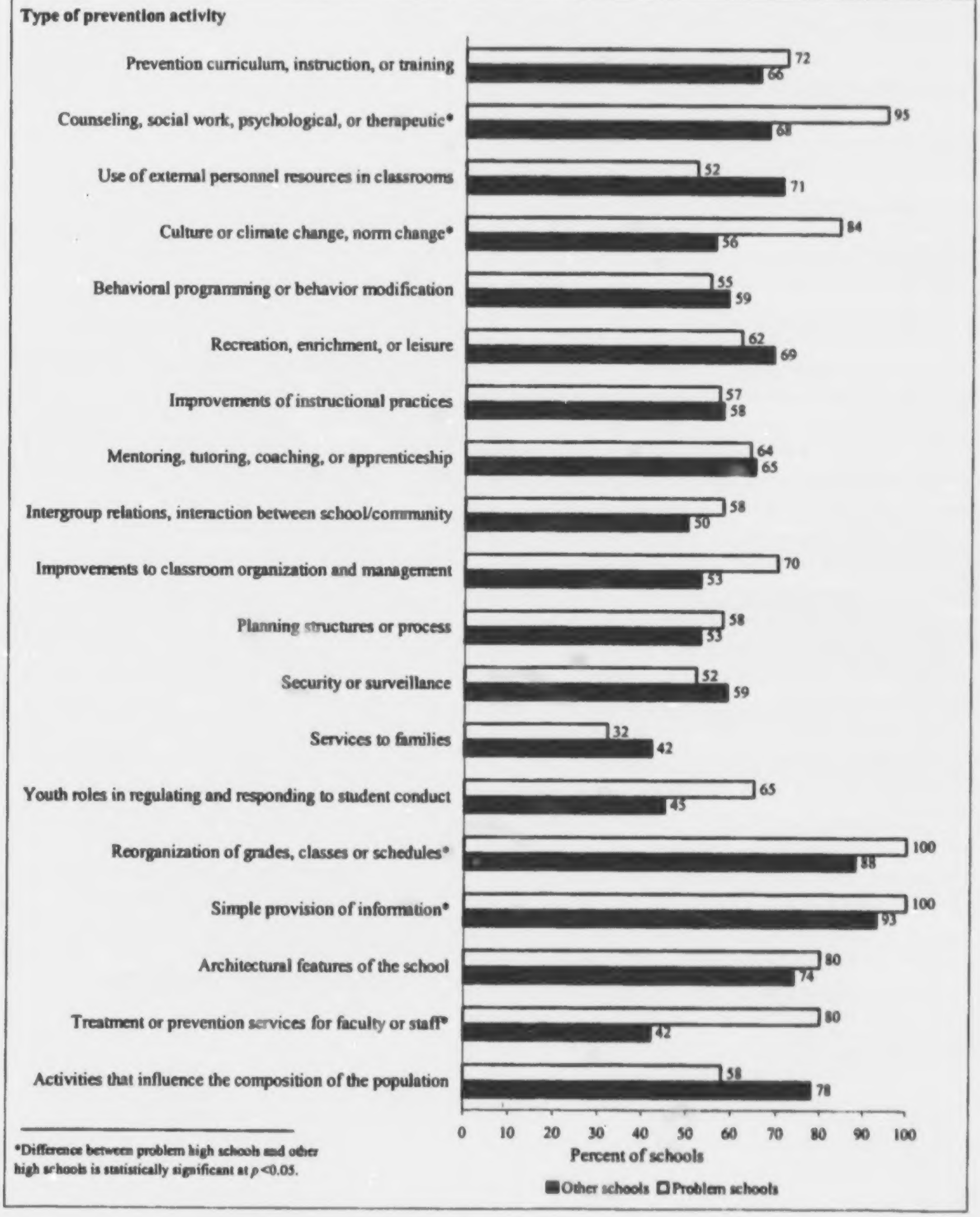
Compared with all other high schools, problem schools were much more likely to have counseling programs for the students (95% compared with 68%) and treatment or prevention services for the faculty and staff (80% compared with 42%). (See Figure 3-4.) Problem schools were also more likely to implement school-wide programs, such as activities targeting culture or climate of the school;

Figure 3-3. Percentage of problem middle schools and other middle schools using each type of prevention activity – 1997-98 school year



*Difference between problem middle schools and other middle schools is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Figure 3-4. Percentage of problem high schools and other high schools using each type of prevention activity – 1997-98 school year



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*Difference between problem high schools and other high schools is statistically significant at $p<0.05$.

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reorganization of grades, classes or schools schedules; and simple provision of information. Both types of high schools were similar on the number of different categories of prevention efforts implemented and on most individual-level programs, including behavior modification, mentoring, and recreation.

School Rules. We found a higher proportion of problem middle schools compared with other middle schools had written rules about dress code and about items (e.g., bags or clothes) in which drugs or weapons can be concealed. At the middle school level, rules about uniforms are more likely to be present in the problem schools than in other schools (27% compared with 17%, although the difference is not statistically significant). Close to 100 percent of all middle schools have rules about drugs. Hence, the problem schools and other schools are very similar on this measure. Problem middle schools and other middle schools also are similar on whether or not they have rules about students leaving campus during school hours, rules about hall wandering or class cutting, or rules about visitor sign-in and registration.

All of the problem high schools in our sample have written rules about bringing weapons to school, while a lower proportion of other high schools have such rules (100% compared with 92%). Compared with other high schools, problem high schools are also more likely to have written rules about time for student arrival at school. Similar to the middle school findings, problem high schools and other high schools are similar with regard to students leaving campus, wandering the halls or cutting class, or visitor sign-in and registration. However, contrary to the middle school results, at the high school level rules about school uniforms are more likely to be present in other schools than in problem schools—20 percent compared with 13 percent (but again, this difference is not statistically significant).

4. QUALITY OF EFFORTS TO PREVENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS

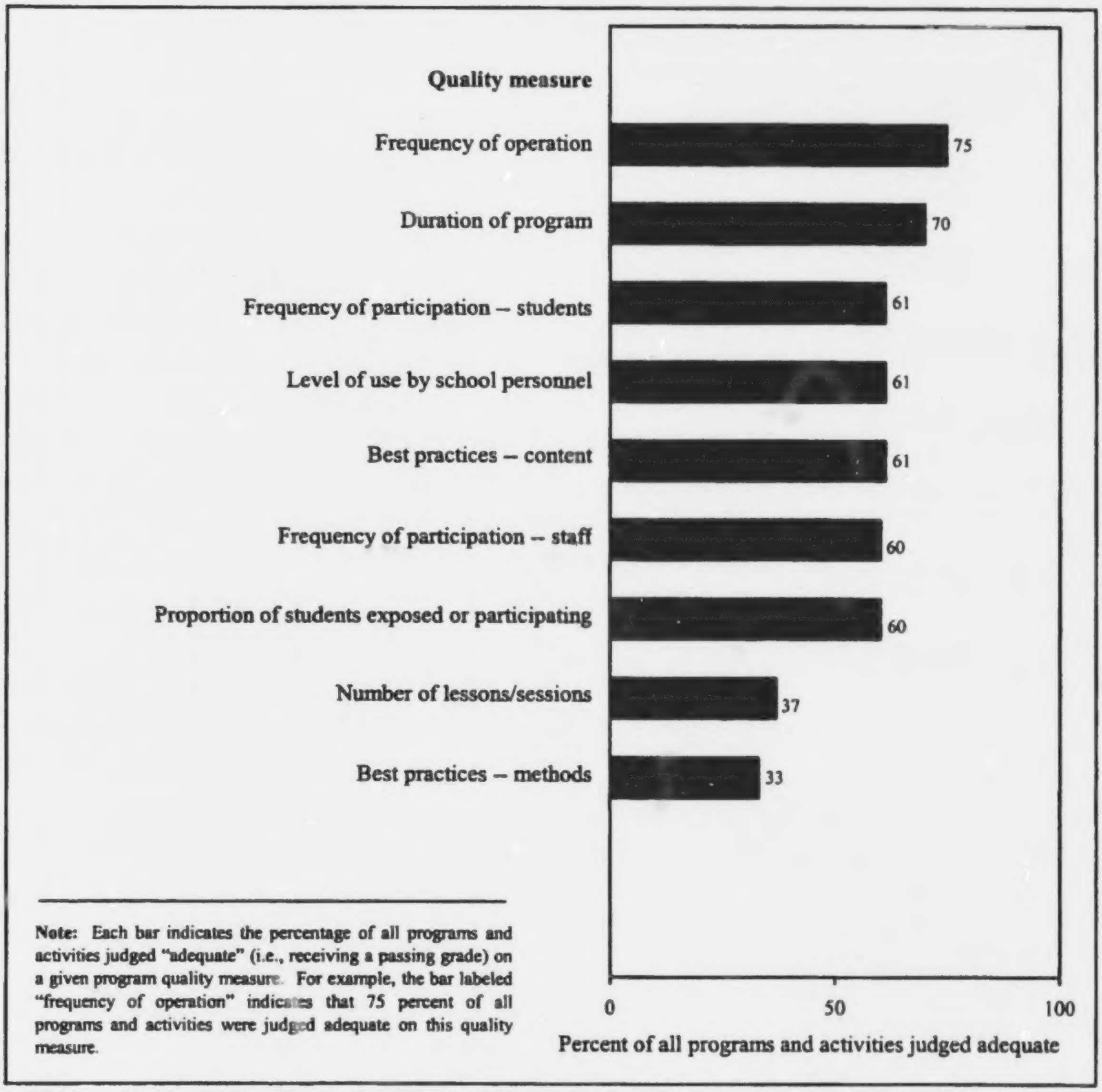
Although the quantity of prevention programming in schools nationally is high, the quality of this programming overall is low. Our analysis of prevention activities revealed that activities designed to change the school or classroom environment are generally of higher quality than those directly aimed at altering student behaviors or attitudes. Security and surveillance efforts are implemented with the highest quality, and services to family members are implemented with the lowest quality. The quality of programming is lowest in rural areas and highest in urban areas. While we would expect higher quality programs to be more effective, we did not directly examine program effectiveness.

This chapter is based on the results of surveys of program providers and principals in our national probability sample of middle schools and high schools. Program providers and principals reported on many different aspects of the 14 categories of activities or programs described in Chapter 3. For each type of activity, we used the data to develop the following 10 measures of program quality: (1) level of use by school personnel, (2) best practices for content, (3) best practices for methods, (4) number of lessons or sessions, (5) duration, (6) frequency of participation by students, (7) frequency of participation by staff, (8) proportion of students exposed or participating; (9) ratio of program or activity providers to students in the school, and (10) frequency of program operation (i.e., how often the program is used or operated.) For nine of the measures of quality, we also judged whether or not the level of quality observed could reasonably be expected to achieve a reduction in problem behavior or an increase in school safety. Activities that achieved at least a minimum standard of quality were designated as "adequate." (See Appendix B for a description of the minimum standards of quality required to achieve a rating of adequate.) We report the results in terms of the percentage of activities nationally.

Quality of Prevention Programming in Schools Is Low

We rated each program as either adequate or not adequate on up to nine measures of program quality. (Note that not all of the quality measures were applicable to each of the 14 program types.) This can be thought of as giving up to nine pass/fail grades (pass is for adequate and fail is for not adequate) for each program studied. Across all programs, the percentage of activities judged adequate on the different quality dimensions ranged from a low of 33 percent for use of best practices for methods to a high of 75 percent for frequency of operation. (See Figure 4-1.) This means, for example, that only 33 percent of all programs and activities, across all of the 14 program types, used best practices for methods.

Figure 4-1. **Percentage of programs or activities judged adequate for each quality measure – 1997-98 school year**



Note: Each bar indicates the percentage of all programs and activities judged "adequate" (i.e., receiving a passing grade) on a given program quality measure. For example, the bar labeled "frequency of operation" indicates that 75 percent of all programs and activities were judged adequate on this quality measure.

Only 37 percent of activities across all 14 program types provided a sufficient number of sessions and lessons to meet the adequacy criteria and only 61 percent of activities used research-based content (best practices for content). About 60 percent of activities across all program types have adequate levels of staff and student participation. On the more positive side, 70 percent of all activities meet the duration criteria, and 75 percent are considered adequate on how often the activity or program is used or operated (frequency of operation). As explained in Appendix B, this means that most programs last for 1 month or longer (duration criterion to be considered adequate), and most are operated continually throughout the year (frequency of operation criterion to be considered adequate).

Adequacy ratings vary by location. These ratings tend to be highest in urban areas and lowest in rural areas. Overall, 60 percent of the activities in urban schools were judged adequate, compared with 55 percent in rural schools.

Activities Designed to Change the School or Classroom Environment Are Higher Quality Than Those Aimed at Altering Student Behaviors or Attitudes

In general, activities designed to change the school or classroom environment are higher quality than those aimed at altering student behaviors or attitudes. For example, classroom organization and management practices are more likely than many other categories of activities (e.g., prevention curriculum, behavior modification, counseling, and recreation programs) to be used by one or more school personnel on a regular basis. Interventions involving improvements to instructional practices and school planning are also used regularly by one or more school personnel. (A program or activity that is used regularly by one or more school personnel is considered adequate using the criteria for the level of use by school personnel quality measure).

Seventy-six percent of prevention curricula have high levels of research-based content, but the methods for nearly three-fourths (73%) of these activities have tenuous standing in the research literature (meaning that 27% of prevention curricula have achieved adequacy for best practices for methods). Counseling and mentoring programs are particularly weak on the use of best practices for methods. Only 8 percent of counseling, social work, and psychological or therapeutic activities and 18 percent of mentoring, tutoring, coaching, and job apprenticeship and placement programs use methods that are research based and considered best practices. (For the former type of activity, examples of those methods include written diagnosis or problem statement prepared for each participant; for the latter activity, they include tutors, mentors, or coaches helping students with social or interpersonal situations or skills such as manners, self-control, or grooming.) In comparison, a higher proportion of classroom organization and management practices, a type of activity designed to change the classroom, have high levels of research-based content and research-based methods (60% and 63%, respectively).

Programs targeting individual behavior change are often implemented with low levels of quality. For example, use of external personnel resources for classroom management and instruction almost never (2%) meet the lessons and sessions criteria for adequate program quality (which is greater than or equal to 25 sessions), and only 8 percent of counseling programs meet the best practices for methods criteria. While mentoring, tutoring, coaching, and job apprenticeship and placement programs have some positive aspects, they fall short in terms of the proportion of programs with adequate sessions and lessons (25%) and use of best practices for methods (18%). Similarly, only 23 percent of behavior modification programs use best practices for methods.

The number of sessions also varies by the focus of the prevention effort (changing the classroom or school versus changing the individual). Mentoring programs have an average of 47 sessions, per school year compared with improvements to classroom instructional methods, which have an average of 101 sessions. For mentoring programs to be considered adequate, at least 52 sessions must take place; for improvements to instructional methods, 30 sessions is considered adequate. This example indicates that, on average, mentoring programs fall short in terms of the number of sessions per school year needed to be considered adequate; and improvements to classroom instructional methods, on average, far exceed the adequate number of sessions.

On the duration quality measure, school or classroom programs also outperformed programs aimed at altering student behaviors. As an example, only 47 percent of programs for families met the adequacy criteria for the duration quality measure compared with 84 percent for programs involving a school planning structure or process to manage change.

Another way to view the quality of programming is in terms of the ***average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate** for each of the 14 program types. To calculate this percentage, we first calculate the **percentage of quality measures judged adequate** for each program or activity. For example, programs in the prevention curriculum, instruction, or training category use 6 of the 10 measures of quality. (In other words, only 6 quality measures are applicable to the prevention curriculum, instruction, or training category.) For a specific program, we might find that the program is judged adequate on three of the six quality measures. This means that the **percentage of quality measures judged adequate** for the program is 50 percent.

To calculate the ***average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate** for the category curriculum instruction, prevention, or training, we added the percentages of all the programs or activities judged adequate within this category and divided by the number of programs or activities. In other words, we obtained the average.[7] The higher the percentage, the higher quality the program category is considered.

Based on this approach, we found that improvements to classroom organization and management and interventions involving school planning structure or process to manage change are the two classroom- and school-level categories (or types of programs) with the highest ***average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate** (71% for both types of programs). (See Figure 4-2.) In comparison, the ***average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate** is only 51 percent for recreation, enrichment and leisure activities; 47 percent for behavioral programming or behavior modification; 45 percent for counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic activities; and 42 percent for services or programs for families.

Security and Surveillance Efforts Are Implemented with the Highest Quality and Services to Family Members Are Implemented with the Lowest Quality

The best-implemented activity is security and surveillance. Ninety percent of these activities meet the adequacy criteria for duration, and 95 percent meet the adequacy criteria for how often the program is used or operated. More than 70 percent of security and surveillance programs used best practices for methods and were rated as adequate on frequency of participation by staff. The security and

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[7] For example, if we had examined only three programs or activities in the prevention curriculum, instruction, or training category (instead of the hundreds of programs that we actually studied), we would have calculated the **percentage of quality measures judged adequate** for each of these programs, such as 50 percent, 70 percent, and 90 percent. To calculate the ***average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate,** (for our example) we would have summed the percentages for the programs (210%) and divide by the number of programs (three) to obtain 70 percent.

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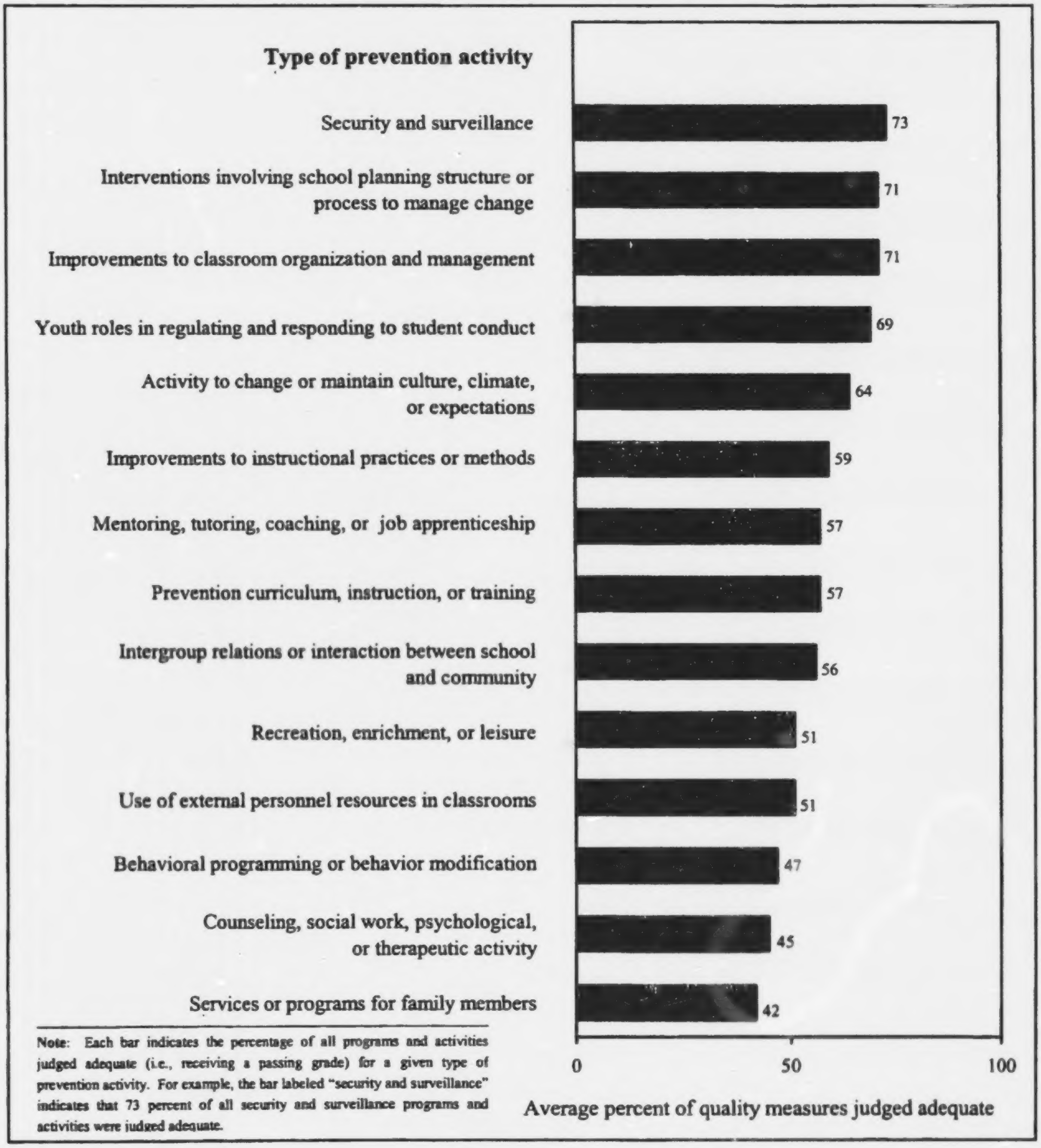
Figure 4-2. Average percentage of quality measures judged adequate for each type of prevention activity – 1997-98 school year



Note: Each bar indicates the percentage of all programs and activities judged adequate (i.e., receiving a passing grade) for a given type of prevention activity. For example, the bar labeled "security and surveillance" indicates that 73 percent of all security and surveillance programs and activities were judged adequate.

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surveillance category also had the highest ***average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate** (73%).

In contrast, only 31 percent of the services or programs for family members met the adequacy criteria for student frequency of participation and only 45 percent met the adequacy criteria for level of use by school personnel. The services or programs for family members also had the lowest percentage of programs meeting the duration criteria (47%) and had the **lowest *average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate** (42%).

Problem Schools: Implementation of Efforts to Prevent Problem Behavior

We examined the quality of implementation for all programs combined and for each of 8 types of prevention programs operating in problem middle schools,[8] other middle schools, problem high schools, and other high schools. The eight specific types of prevention activities included (1) prevention curriculum, instruction, or training; (2) behavioral programming or behavior modification; (3) counseling, social work, and psychological, or therapeutic activities; (4) mentoring, tutoring, coaching, or job apprenticeships and placements; (5) improvements to classroom organization and management; (6) interventions involving school planning structures or process to manage change; (7) security and surveillance; and (8) services or programs for family members.

We assessed overall program quality by examining the ***average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate** across programs in both problem and other schools. At the middle-school level, the results indicate that problem schools and other schools are similar on quality of programming for these eight program types (categories) and for all programs combined (i.e., we found no statistically significant differences between these two types of schools). (See Figure 4-3.) At the high school level, problem schools implemented programs categorized as prevention, curriculum, or instructional training with greater overall quality than other high schools (83% compared with 60%). (See Figure 4-4.) However, problem high schools and other high schools were similar on the ***average* percentage of quality measures judged adequate** across all program categories (55% compared with 53%).

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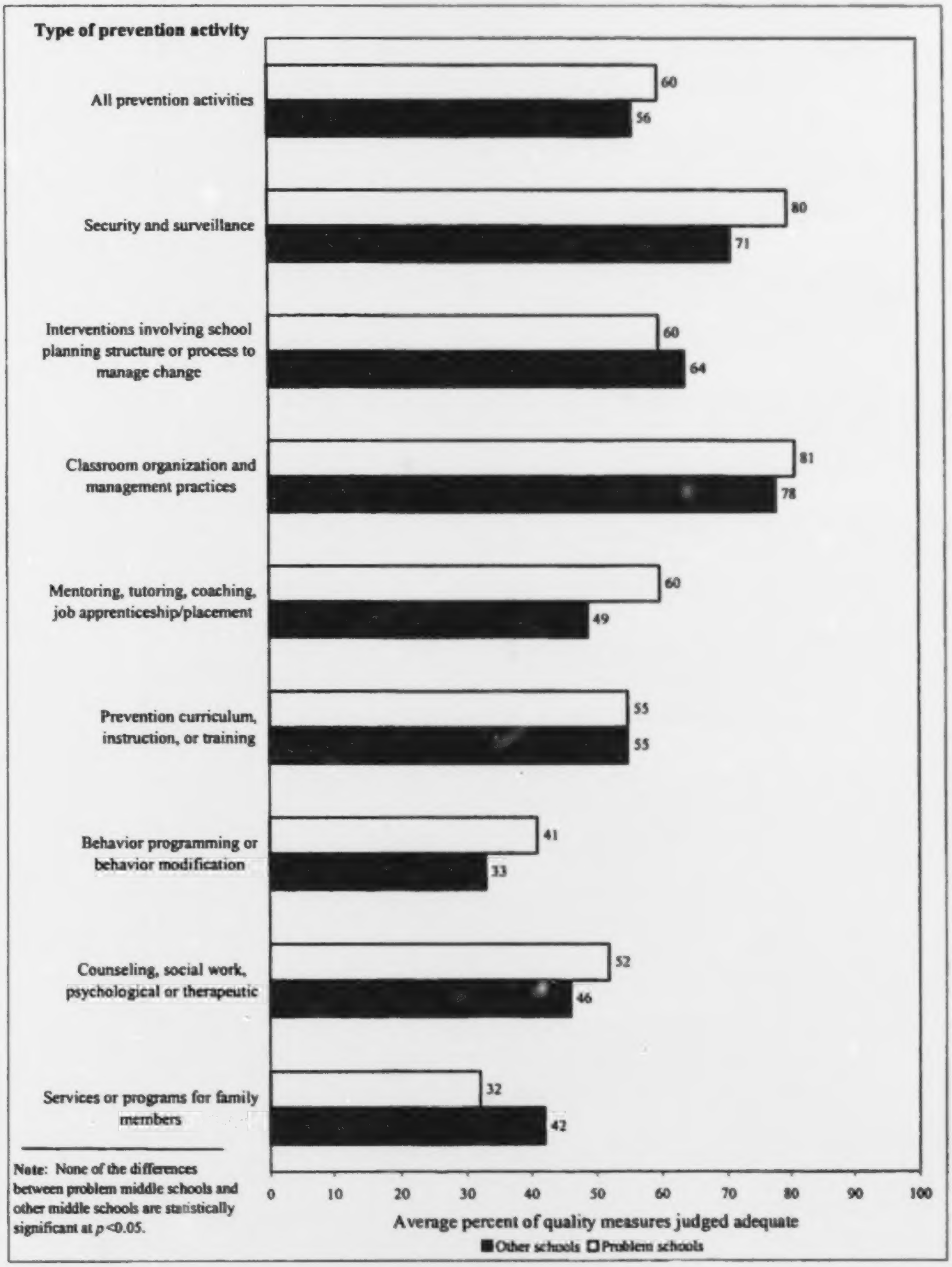
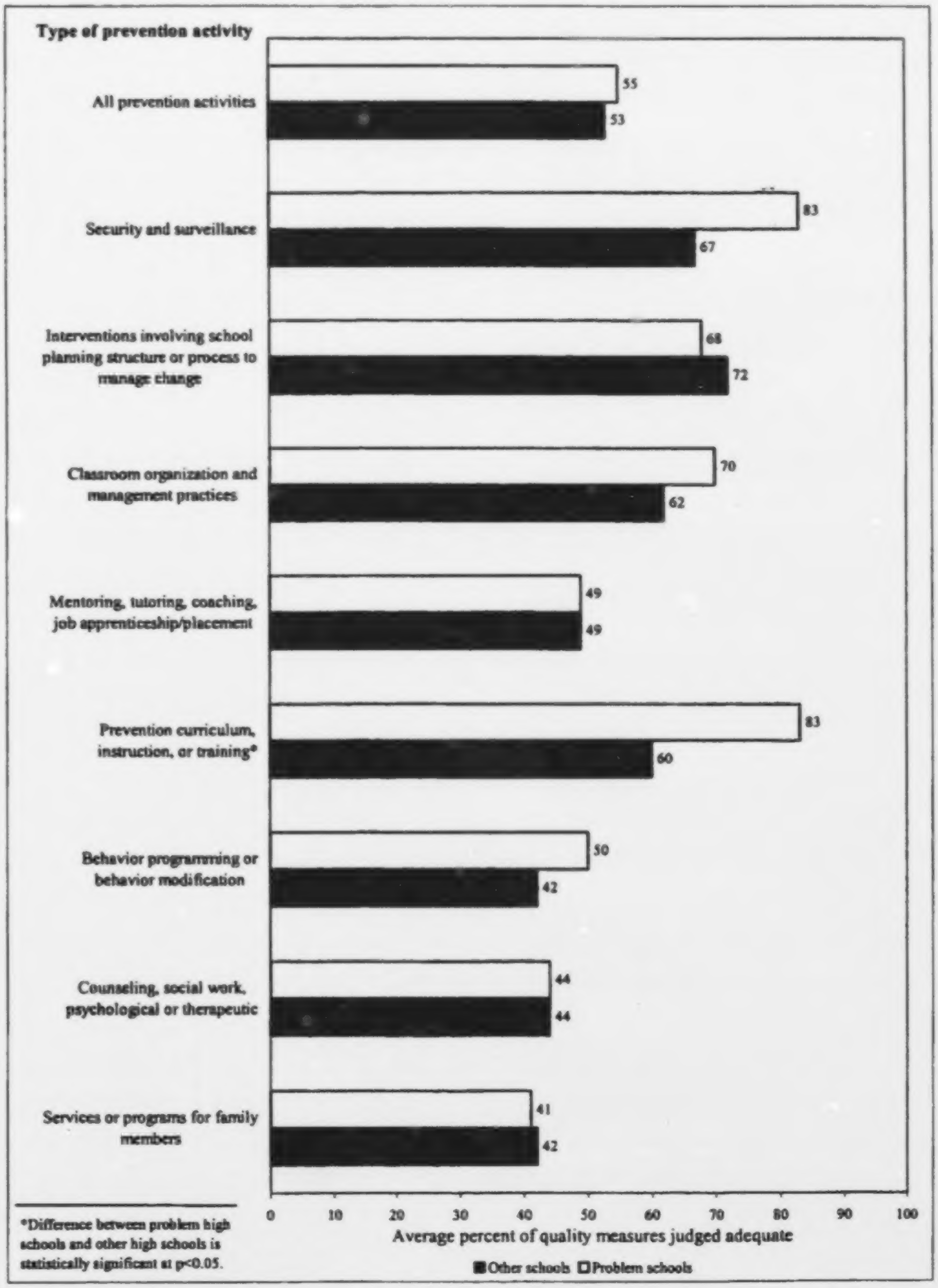
[8] Problem schools were defined as those with high levels of serious violent crime, as described in Chapter 2. Only eight of the 14 types of prevention programs were common to the problem middle schools, other middle schools, problem high schools, and other high schools.

Figure 4-3. Average percentage of quality measures judged adequate for selected prevention activities for problem middle schools and other middle schools – 1997-98 school year*



Note: None of the differences between problem middle schools and other middle schools are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Figure 4-4. Average percentage of quality measures judged adequate for selected prevention activities for problem high schools and other high schools – 1997-98 school year



*Difference between problem high schools and other high schools is statistically significant at $p<0.05$.

5. PLANNING AND INFORMATION

Comprehensive planning of prevention activities in schools entails assessing needs, setting objectives, selecting activities that can achieve the objectives, and assessing progress toward the objectives. At the school level, these planning elements are often influenced or shaped by school districts. Planning for many individual prevention activities is weak; school-level planning activities appear to be considerably stronger. Sound planning is associated with several measures of high-quality programming.

This chapter is based on the results of surveys of program providers in and school district officials for our national probability sample of schools. The information from school district officials is for middle schools and high schools only; the information from program providers is for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. School district officials, typically the prevention coordinator or coordinator for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) program, reported on how the districts for the middle schools and high schools participating in the study planned their prevention programs; we report the results in terms of the districts for a given percentage of secondary schools nationally. Program providers reported on aspects of how they planned their activities or programs; we report the results in terms of the percentage of schools nationally.

Many School Districts Influence the Planning of Prevention Activities at Schools

Schools rarely plan prevention activities in a vacuum. A variety of forces and factors can influence planning in schools, especially for local school districts. Specifically, districts often shape school planning by restricting the range of prevention activities permissible and by requiring and providing support for schools to engage in planning.

First, some districts restrict the choice of SDFSCA-funded prevention activities that schools have open to them. (As discussed in Chapter 6, districts often draw on sources in addition to SDFSCA to fund their prevention activities.) Districts for 20 percent of secondary schools require schools to select prevention activities from a list offered by the district. Districts for another 44 percent of schools offer a list of SDFSCA-funded prevention activities from which schools can choose activities. (Some of these schools have the option of adopting activities other than those on the district list.) However, schools also can influence district use of SDFSCA funds. For example, in districts for 73 percent of schools, input from secondary schools is a great or very great influence on the violence prevention efforts supported by the district.

Second, districts can require or encourage schools to engage in planning activities. Districts for 48 percent of secondary schools require schools to participate in needs assessments or evaluations by administering surveys sponsored by the district; districts for another 27 percent of schools permit schools to participate in these surveys at their discretion. Districts for 60 percent of schools require their secondary schools to prepare plans specifying how the schools will spend their SDFSCA funds; districts for another 25 percent of schools permit schools to develop plans at their discretion. Finally, districts for 60 percent of schools require schools to report on their progress on SDFSCA-funded activities using forms or structures specified by the district; again, districts for 23 percent of schools leave reporting using district specified forms or structures to the discretion of the schools. We are unable to judge the quality of these prevention planning activities or the extent to which schools actively use them to improve their prevention strategies.

Third, many districts provide support for school planning of prevention activities. Districts for the vast majority of secondary schools provided the following: (1) training on program implementation (districts for 93% of schools), (2) assistance to schools on conducting needs assessments (districts for 89% of schools), (3) training on program planning and development (districts for 88% of schools), (4) technical assistance on selecting prevention activities to implement (districts for 84% of schools), and (5) assistance on conducting program evaluations (districts for 84% of schools). In Chapter 6, we provide additional information on the types of assistance that districts provide to their schools.

Prevention Planning Is Weak for Many Individual Activities

Schools can engage in two types of planning of prevention activities. They can plan individual activities or programs; they also can conduct school-wide or systemic planning of prevention activities, which can entail taking a broader view of school problem behavior and how to reduce or prevent it. Fewer than two-thirds of individual prevention activities are based on "sound" planning. (We discuss the criteria for sound planning in the next section.) For the 57 percent of schools that engage in it, school-level planning appears to be considerably stronger than activity-level planning.

Activity- or Program-level Planning. Although planning for many individual prevention activities meets some criteria of sound planning, planning for fewer than two-thirds of these activities meets all of the criteria. Our criteria for sound planning are as follows: (1) initiation of activity by "school insiders" (e.g., school staff), (2) development of activity by school insiders or researchers, (3) selection of activity using research-based information sources, and (4) adoption of activity based on approaches that have been demonstrated by research to be effective.

Initiation of prevention activities is the starting point for a school adopting or developing a given activity. It might follow, for example, awareness of an unacceptable level or type of problem behavior in a school and the willingness to address it. The impetus for new activities can be local, for example, a committee of concerned parents and school staff; at the other extreme, activities can be imposed by outside actors, such as school districts. We consider initiation by school insiders to be an element of sound planning because insiders are most knowledgeable about the applicability of prevention activities to their own schools; in addition, involving insiders in these roles can increase school staff acceptance of and support for the activities. Schools were as likely to adopt prevention activities that were initiated by school insiders as activities that were initiated by school districts or researchers. None of these types of initiators—school insiders, school districts, or researchers—had substantial influence on initiating activities.

Development of prevention activities follows the initiation of these activities. It is the process of deciding what the prevention activities will include. Involving insiders in the development is important for some of the same reasons that insider initiation of prevention activities can be important. Involving researchers in development helps to ensure that the activities are tied to school needs and that the activities are based on evidence of effectiveness. Prevention activities were as likely to be developed by school insiders as by external parties: Both were among the developers for 64 percent of the prevention activities. Prevention activities were less likely to be developed by researchers (26% of activities).

Selection of prevention activities using research-based information is potentially valuable because that information can inform the fit between the activities and school needs, and thereby increase the likely effectiveness of the activities. On average, schools used two sources to select a given prevention activity; however, research-based sources were among the less frequently used sources. The sources that schools used most often to select activities were: (1) other program providers (57% of activities), (2) meetings within the school district (51% of activities), and (3) meetings outside of the district (50% of activities). Among the less frequently used sources were (1) formal outcome evaluation (28% of activities), (2) publications summarizing research (38% of activities), and (3) formal needs assessment (40% of activities).

Adoption of prevention activities based on approaches that have been demonstrated by research to be effective also can increase the chances that an activity will be effective in a particular implementation. Perhaps as a result of the limited use of research-based information on effectiveness, only 33 percent of the prevention activities used methods or approaches found to be effective in the research literature, and only 61 percent of the activities used research-based content.

School-level Planning. In addition to the planning of individual prevention activities, many schools engaged in formal school-level planning that successfully incorporated the elements of sound planning. More than one-half of the schools (57%) have implemented "interventions that involve a school planning structure or planning process to manage change." These activities were more likely than other types of activities to have as an objective improving school capacity for self-management (e.g., by involving key individuals in planning for school improvement).

The school planning structure or planning process activities include many elements of strong planning. The vast majority of these activities involve the following: (1) use of information about the school (91%), (2) identification of goals (91%), (3) use of information about effective practices (88%), (4) development of action plans (93%), (5) monitoring of planned activities (88%), and (6) evaluation of outcomes (91%). School planning activities were among the higher quality types of activities, with 71 percent of the quality measures for these activities being judged "adequate" (as opposed to 57% across measures for all activities). (See Chapter 4.)

Sound Planning Is Related to High-quality Prevention Activities

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the use of certain planning approaches is associated with higher quality prevention activities. Prevention activities initiated by school insiders are more likely to be associated with measures of higher quality programming than activities for which the school district or researchers had greater responsibly for initiation. Prevention activities that are developed locally or by researchers also are more likely to be associated with measures of strong implementation. Use of formal needs assessment and more extensive searching for information about what will work best in the school is associated with measures of stronger implementation. The latter type of activities is especially likely to incorporate "best practices." (As discussed in Chapter 4 and Appendix B, Gottfredson Associates developed criteria for best practices for a given type of prevention activity, based on a review of the science-based literature.)

Problem Schools: Planning and Information

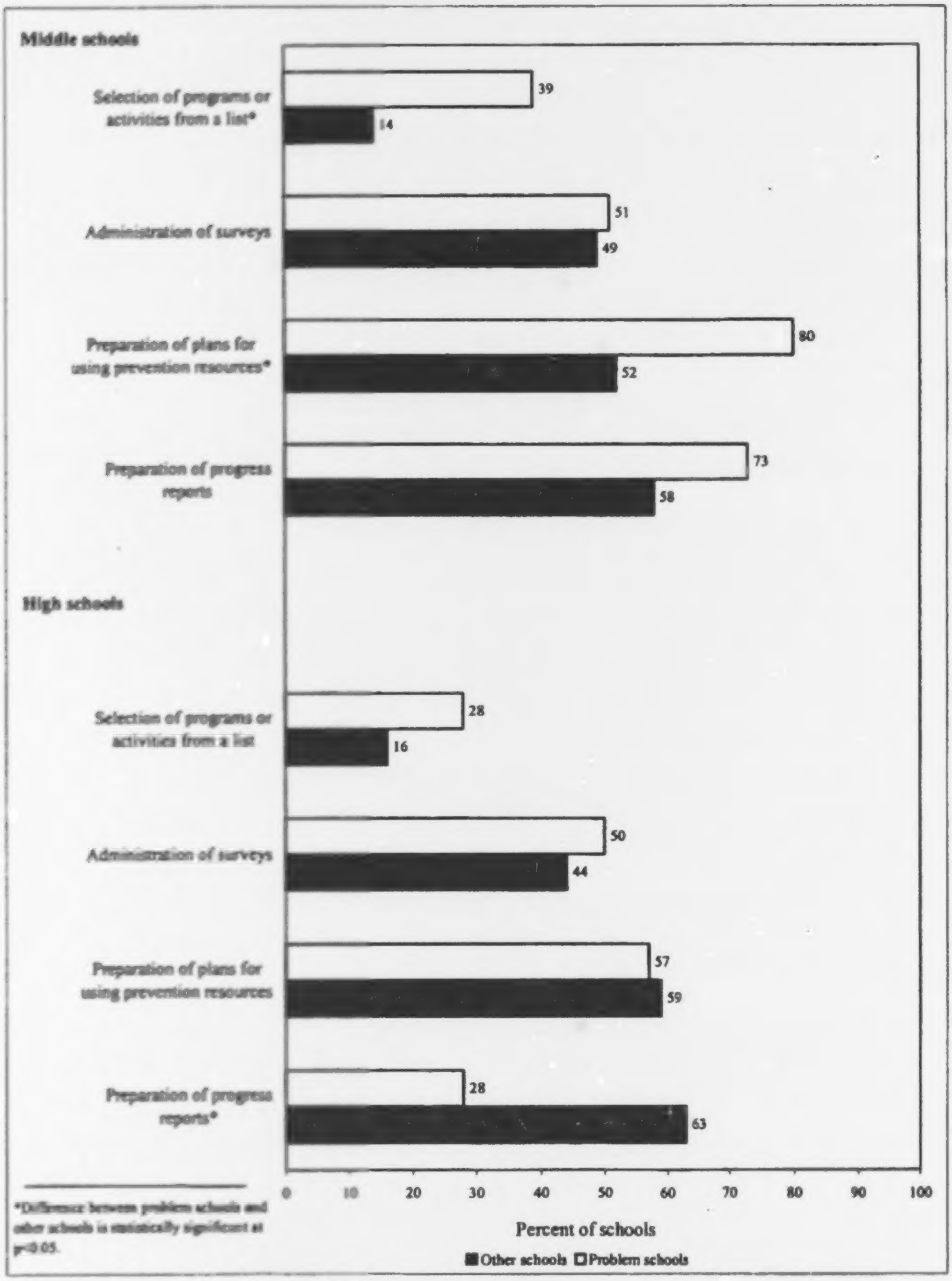
Problem schools and other schools tended to be similar on many aspects of program initiation and original program development. (As discussed in Chapter 2, problem schools were the schools with the highest levels of serious violent crime reported to law enforcement.) An exception is that school districts were more likely to start prevention activities for problem middle schools than for other middle schools. Compared with other middle schools, problem middle schools generally are more often required to receive direction from school districts and are more likely to receive some forms of assistance from them.

Responsibility for Program Initiation and Original Development. School districts are more often responsible for starting prevention programs or activities in problem middle schools than in other middle schools. However, problem schools and other schools were similar on who originally developed the school's prevention programs (local or external parties or researchers). Problem high schools and other high schools also were similar on all seven of the information sources used to select prevention programs and on the average number of different information sources used (2.5 for problem schools compared with 2.3 for other high schools).

Problem middle schools and other middle schools were similar on responsibility for starting school programs, original development of school programs, and the type or amount of information sources sought to select prevention programs.

School District Direction and Influence. In general, problem middle schools are more likely than other middle schools to be located in school districts that require schools to engage in certain types of program planning and implementation activities. For example, when selecting prevention programs or activities, 39 percent of problem middle schools are located in districts that require schools to select programs or activities from a district list compared with only 14 percent of other middle schools. (See Figure 5-1.) Problem middle schools also are more likely to be located in districts require to

Figure 5-1. Percentage of problem schools and other schools in districts reporting mandated school planning of prevention activities – 1997-98 school year



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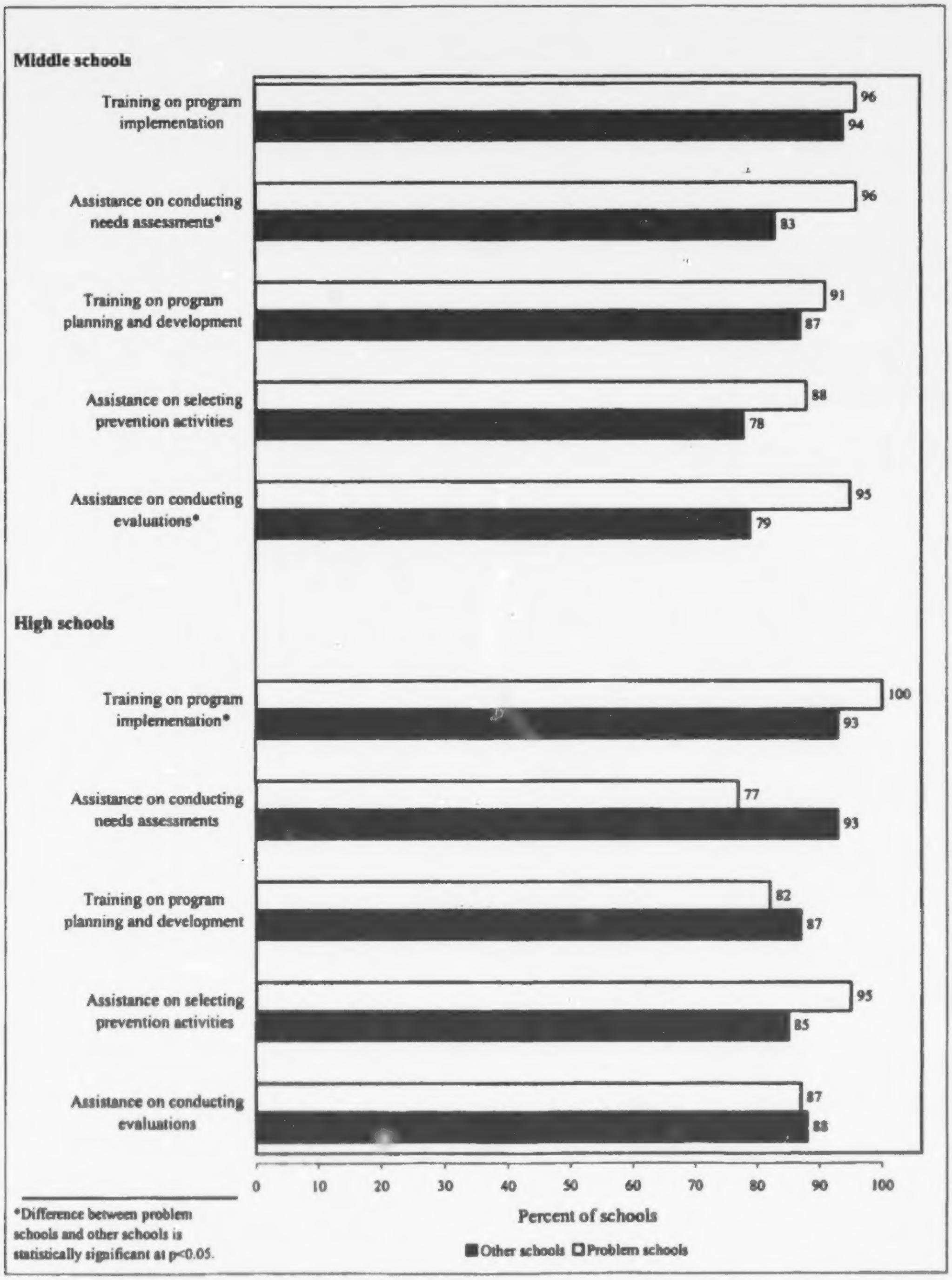
*Difference between problem schools and other schools is statistically significant at $p<0.05$.

schools to conduct some type of needs assessment or evaluation (64% compared with 35%). A larger percentage of problem middle schools (80%) than other middle schools (52%) are located in districts that require schools to prepare plans specifying how prevention resources will be used. In contrast, a much lower percentage of problem high schools than other high schools (28% compared with 63%) are located in districts that require schools to write progress reports.

Services and Resources Provided by School Districts. Problem middle schools are as likely as other middle schools to be located in school districts that provide training to schools on program implementation. However, a higher percentage of problem high schools than other high schools are located in districts that provide training on program implementation. (See Figure 5-2.) Roughly equal percentages of problem schools at both the middle school and high school levels are located in school districts that provide training on program planning and development. A higher percentage of problem middle schools than other middle schools also are located in school districts that provide assistance with conducting needs assessments (96% compared with 83%). While more problem middle schools are located in school districts that provide program evaluation assistance (95% of problem schools compared with 79% of other schools), approximately the same percentage of problem high schools and other high schools are located in school districts providing this assistance.

Figure 5-2. Percentage of problem schools and other schools in districts providing support for school planning of prevention activities – 1997-98 school year



*Difference between problem schools and other schools is statistically significant at $p<0.05$.

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6. FUNDING FOR PREVENTION EFFORTS IN SCHOOLS

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) program is the most frequently used source of funding for district prevention programming. Many districts also draw on a wide variety of other federal, state, and local funding sources to support their prevention activities. Districts use their SDFSCA funding for diverse prevention activities, including direct activities for students (e.g., prevention and instruction) and indirect activities (e.g., staff training). Districts for the majority of schools believe that SDFSCA funding is important to maintaining their prevention programming; a smaller proportion of principals indicated that this funding actually helped to increase the safety and orderliness of their school, or to prevent problem behavior.

This chapter is based on the results of surveys of principals and program providers and school district officials for our national probability sample of schools. The information from school district officials is for middle schools and high schools only; the information from principals and program providers is for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. School district officials, typically the prevention coordinator or coordinator for the SDFSCA program, reported on how the districts for the middle schools and high schools participating in the study funded their prevention programs; we report the results in terms of the districts for given percentages of secondary schools nationally. Principals and program providers reported on aspects of how they funded their activities or programs; we report the results in terms of the percentage of schools nationally.

SDFSCA is the Most Widely Used Source of Funding for Prevention Activities, though the Districts for Many Schools Also Receive Funding from Other Sources

SDFSCA was the most widely used funding source for prevention activities in schools. Districts for approximately 98 percent of schools nationally, public and private, provided prevention activities that were funded by SDFSCA. School principals and program providers within schools often are unaware that their prevention activities are funded by SDFSCA. For example, only 58 percent of principals knew that their schools receive SDFSCA-funded resources. This information conflicts with reports by school district SDFSCA coordinators (for 88% of schools nationally) indicating that **all** public schools in their district provided SDFSCA-funded prevention services to students. We view the discrepancy as reflecting the difficulty school principals have in distinguishing among different types of services and funding received from their districts.

Students attending private schools are less likely to receive SDFSCA-funded prevention activities than students attending public schools. SDFSCA coordinators report that, although all or many students received SDFSCA-funded services at 92 percent of public schools, all or many students received such services at only 44 percent of private schools.[9]

In addition to SDFSCA, districts draw on many other sources of funding for prevention activities in schools. The most frequent other sources are general state funds (districts for 41% of schools), state funds specially earmarked for prevention (districts for 31% of schools), and federal funds besides SDFSCA funds (districts for 31% of schools). In addition to these funding sources, 51 percent of districts received in-kind contributions (e.g., photocopying of program materials); and, in 88 percent of districts, parents volunteered time (e.g., to assist with mentoring efforts).

Districts Use SDFSCA Funds to Support a Wide Variety of Prevention Activities

School districts use SDFSCA funds to support a broad range of prevention activities. To some degree, SDFSCA funds support all of the types of prevention efforts described in Chapters 3 and 4. In districts for nearly 50 percent of schools nationally (49%), SDFSCA funds supported prevention instruction or training to a great or very great extent. Other activities that received a high degree of SDFSCA support include counseling (districts for 43% of schools), prevention activities to improve instructional practices in classrooms (districts for 42% of schools), training or staff development (districts for 40% of schools), and behavioral programming or behavior modification (districts for 29% of schools). Activities that focus on architectural or structural features of the school were least supported by SDFSCA funds (districts for 4% of schools). The type of effort that received the most SDFSCA support from school districts was provision of information about violence, drug use, other risky behaviors, or the availability of prevention services (districts for 60% of schools).

Districts also used SDFSCA funds to support prevention-related activities other than direct activities for students. These activities, which were funded in whole or in part by SDFSCA, include team building or organization development (districts for 45% of schools), assistance with conducting needs assessment (districts for 51% of schools), assistance in program planning (districts for 63% of schools), and assistance with program evaluation (districts for 58% of schools). Although many districts do provide these activities entirely without SDFSCA funds—for example, districts for 42 percent of schools fund team building or organization development with only non-SDFSCA funds—SDFSCA funds play a major role in the needs assessment, planning, and evaluation assistance that districts provide to their schools

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[9] Equitable participation by private school students is statutorily required. However, private school officials may decide to have their students opt out of the services.

Districts varied on how they allocated SDFSCA resources across their schools. Most often districts used these funds to make prevention activities available to all schools districtwide (districts for 54% of schools). Districts also targeted funds based on school needs (districts for 22% of schools), used a formula to allocate funds (districts for 11% of schools), and required schools to apply for funds (districts for 5% of schools).

SDFSCA Funding is Very Important to District Prevention Programming

District officials for 82 percent of schools report that SDFSCA funding has helped to continue useful programs to a great or very great extent. Districts for 72 percent of schools also report that SDFSCA funding has been a great or very great help with initiating new types of programs.

In the 58 percent of schools for which principals report that SDFSCA funds are used, nearly one-half of the principals (48%) said that SDFSCA funds are very important to improving or maintaining the safety and orderliness of their school or are very important in preventing problem behavior.

7. CONCLUSIONS

One of the central findings of the Study on School Violence and Prevention is that while, on average, schools nationally are implementing a large number of prevention efforts, the quality of those efforts is low. In this chapter, we briefly examine the implications of that finding for policy and research. We also suggest approaches to increasing the quality of school-based prevention.

Shift Resources to Emphasize Quality over Quantity

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, we were struck by both the large number of prevention activities in operation in schools and by the low quality of those efforts. For example, schools implemented a median of 14 different activities, but fewer than 60 percent of activities in certain categories met adequacy criteria.

The balance between quality and quantity of prevention efforts seems to have shifted to quantity. Given limited resources for prevention, we urge a shift back to quality. Fewer but higher quality activities may help schools and districts to achieve their goals better. For example, one of the quality dimensions on which activities fared least well is number of lessons or sessions: only 37 percent of activities were judged adequate on these criteria. One can argue that directing resources to increasing the number of lessons for the otherwise strongest activities--even if it means discontinuing weaker activities--is justified.

In our view, willingness to choose carefully among the activities to adopt, retain, or discard is the starting point for improving school-based prevention. The remainder of our conclusions assumes that administrators, particularly at the school and district levels, have this willingness.

Improve Program Planning and Monitoring

In addition to focusing resources on fewer but stronger activities, administrators may be wise to increase the amount of resources allocated to planning and monitoring prevention activities. We found that planning for individual activities was fairly weak overall. For example, schools used formal need assessments as a source in selecting only 40 percent of activities; they used publications summarizing research as a source for selecting only 38 percent of activities. Also, only 61 percent of activities met adequacy criteria for using best practices for content; only 33 percent met criteria for using best practices for methods.

To help make difficult decisions on adopting, retaining, or discarding prevention activities, districts need to investigate better the research evidence on the effectiveness of those activities. More and more guides are becoming available that can facilitate these investigations, including those developed by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (1995), U.S. Department of Education (e.g., on exemplary and promising programs), and Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (e.g., on effective prevention programs). Besides using these guides to select new effective activities, administrators should seriously consider using them to critically examine ongoing strategies and eliminate those that have little or no research support.

Administrators may also wish to increase emphasis on monitoring the extent to which the implementation of research-based activities remains true to the program model, or be willing to conduct their own outcome evaluation to ensure that program objectives are being met. Clearly, an important issue is balancing attempts to achieve fidelity to a program model with the desire to tailor programming to local needs and conditions. This is an area in which additional research would be helpful, for example, in identifying how and the extent to which different activities can be adapted before they lose fidelity.

Strengthen Factors Associated with Quality of Programming

The Study on School Violence and Prevention raises serious questions about the overall quality of school-based prevention programming. We found, for example, that several types of prevention activities were judged adequate on fewer than 60 percent of quality criteria. In line with focusing efforts better and allocating resources more wisely, educators may wish to concentrate on efforts to improve quality. Gottfredson et al. (2000) discuss findings from our collaborative study on predictors of the quality and extensiveness of prevention activity. They conclude that the most important predictors are: (1) extensiveness and quality of training of the staff who implement activities; (2) supervision of the activity; (3) principal support for the activity; (4) degree of structure or scriptedness of the activities; (5) local responsibility for initiating the activity; (6) use of multiple sources of information on the activity, including district personnel and experts; and (7) activity is a part of the regular school program. (See Gottfredson et al, 2000, for a detailed discussion of these findings and recommendations.)

Some of these predictors emphasize program management at the school level, such as the extent of staff training for implementing program activities and supervision of those activities. While strengthening these factors may be obtainable for many schools and districts, they will have costs (e.g., for additional staff time). Again, the costs potentially could be met by focusing on fewer but stronger prevention activities.

APPENDIX A. STUDY METHODS

In this appendix, we provide detailed information on the study method including: (1) sampling, (2) recruitment, (3) questionnaires, (4) data collection, (5) response rates, (6) data processing, (7) weighting, and (8) analysis.

Sampling

The sample was drawn from a commercial list of all public and private schools in the United States (excluding schools in Puerto Rico and other territories) maintained by Market Data Retrieval. The list incorporates data from the National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data, adds private schools, and provides additional information (such as principal names).

We drew a stratified probability sample of schools, with nine strata defined by the three instructional levels (elementary, middle, and senior high school) and three levels of metropolitan status (rural, suburban, and urban).[10] Stratifying the sample on instructional level and metropolitan status was desirable because we expected that prevention activities would be likely to differ greatly on both of these factors.

From each of the nine strata, 143 public and private schools (or 429 schools for each instructional level) were selected. (Private schools account for 19% of the total sample: 23% of elementary schools, 2% of middle schools, and 31% of high schools.) We hoped for a response rate of approximately 85 percent for each of the screener and the detailed data collection efforts, which would have yielded an overall response rate of just over 70 percent or approximately 300 schools from each instructional level. The sample sizes were chosen based on an analysis of the relationship between the standard error of the mean and sample sizes for each instructional level, since our study design called for separate analyses for each level. The analyses revealed that large and moderate gains in the efficiency of sample statistics could be made with sample sizes up to about 300 schools per instructional level. Beyond 300, the gains in efficiency would be much more modest per additional 100 schools.

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[10] The sampled high schools include a large percentage of schools that differ from what one typically considers a high school (i.e., schools with either 9th to 12th grade or 10th to 12th grade enrollment). The convention that we used (and that has been used by many other education studies) is to classify schools with kindergarten to 12th grade enrollment as high schools. (In fact, public high schools with 9th to 12th grade or 10th to 12th grade enrollments account for only 33 percent of high schools nationally.) In addition to these combined schools, the sampled high schools include a number of vocational and alternative schools.

The reader should note that during data collection and analysis we discovered that approximately 7 percent of schools had been assigned inappropriate urbanicity classifications. In addition, approximately 1 percent of schools had been assigned inappropriate educational levels. We also discovered that eight of our sampled schools were no longer functioning as schools. However, these inappropriate assignments had a negligible effect on sampling, weighting, and data analysis.

Recruitment

Recruitment consisted of several steps, including recruitment for the first phase of data collection (or principal screener survey); and state, district, and school recruitment for the second phase of data collection.

Recruitment for Principal Screening Survey. Sample recruitment for the first phase of data collection began in spring 1997 with a principal screening survey questionnaire that was mailed to all sampled schools. The mailing included a letter from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) describing the study, and letters of endorsement from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). Schools that did not return completed questionnaires were prompted through the summer and fall of 1997 by telephone and mail, including overnight mail service.

State Recruitment. For the second phase of data collection, the first step in the recruitment process was to contact each state's superintendent's office and the state SDFSCA coordinators. Materials were mailed to both chief state school officers (CSSO) and all state SDFSCA coordinators in October 1997. Each package included letters from ED and NIJ describing the study, letters of endorsement from NASSP and NAESP, list of the sampled districts and schools in their state, and copy of the study brochure. Westat staff telephoned the CSSO offices to confirm receipt of the materials and to follow up on any questions.

District Recruitment. Next, we approached the school districts in which the sampled schools were located. Recruitment materials were mailed to district superintendents in November 1997. Depending on information previously gathered on district policies, different recruitment packages were sent to districts. For most districts, the mailing included a letter describing study activities and requesting permission for the sampled school(s) to participate in the study; for districts whose sampled school(s) indicated that it (they) had authority to decide to participate, the mailing included a letter only describing the study activities. (During the first phase of data collection, principals had been asked to indicate whether or not they could approve a student survey.) As needed, formal applications were submitted with the other recruitment materials.

District recruitment was a lengthy and time-consuming process. Because we had a probability sample of schools, without any clustering of schools within school districts, we approached more than 500 districts regarding participation of schools in their districts. In most cases, only one school in a district had been sampled and the most time-consuming part of recruitment was contacting the appropriate district official. Another complication was that recruitment efforts identified additional districts that should have initially been sent formal applications.

Some recruitment was conducted by a refusal conversion team. After recruiters had seemingly exhausted avenues of approach, the tough cases were turned over to project staff who were more experienced in working with school districts. These staff approached all refusing districts and requested they reconsider their decision not to participate. Much district-level refusal conversion was underway just after a tragic school shooting; in light of those events, some officials did agree to participate.

Recruitment of the formal application districts was also managed by experienced project staff. Those districts were telephoned 10 days after the applications were submitted and repeatedly telephoned until approval was granted or refused. Some districts were very responsive to our applications and made a decision within 6 weeks. Other districts required repeated contacting.

School Recruitment. As soon as a district agreed to participate, efforts to recruit the school(s) in that district began. Making initial contact with principals was somewhat easier than reaching district officials, though it was still time intensive. Once reached, the principals were asked to participate. Some principals requested copies of study materials before giving consent. Other principals expressed hesitation about surveying students. Where necessary, recruiters were permitted to drop the student survey component so as not to lose the school's participation completely. After principals agreed to participate, the recruiters explained what participation would involve and asked the principal to name an individual who could act as school coordinator. Principals were then sent a confirmation letter thanking them for agreeing to participate. School coordinators were provided with a stipend of $100 to compensate them for work on the study that occurred outside of regular business hours.

We successfully recruited 220 elementary schools and 458 middle and high schools to participate in the study. An additional 80 schools had initially agreed to participate, but were unable to do so.

Questionnaires

Data collection was primarily conducted using instruments developed by Gottfredson Associates. The instrument used to collect information from school district officials was developed by Westat. Specifics on the data collected from each type of respondent are as follows:

- **Principals** completed screening instruments[11] that identified all prevention activities in the sampled school.
- **Principals** provided information on the school's discipline policy and management of student behavior. They also reported on (1) discipline practices, (2) school demography, (3) their leadership style, (4) biographical information, (5) origins of programs, (6) costs and funding sources for programs, (7) staffing stability, and (8) organizational capacity.
- **Program providers** completed activity detail questionnaires. Fourteen questionnaires--one for each type of prevention activity--collected detailed information on the implementation of each prevention effort. They also collected information on the formal planning efforts that schools initiate to improve school management and on the funding sources for violence prevention efforts. Topics included (1) content, (2) objectives, (3) level of use, (4) duration and frequency of exposure, (5) time and place, (6) target population, (7) size of group, (8) training, (9) cultural appropriateness, (10) sources of funding, (11) obstacles to implementation, (12) characteristics of provider, and (13) biographical information.
- **Teachers**[12] reported on student behaviors in class; personal safety; school climate, including the relationships between administrators and teachers, how they perceived administrators and the rest of the teaching staff, and ability of staff to collaborate and work together toward shared goals and objectives; and information on the school's programs and practices to prevent problem behavior or to increase school safety or orderliness.
- **Students**[13] also reported on their exposure to prevention efforts and on personal victimization at school and their perceptions of school safety. In addition, the student survey collected information on demographics; educational plans and efforts;

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[11] The screener instruments were based on a taxonomy of prevention efforts that was developed after a review of technical reports, agency and foundation reports, and funding lists to identify examples of programs or activities undertaken by schools to reduce or prevent violence, drug use, and other forms of problem behavior; more than 600 different program or activity models were classified to devise a comprehensive taxonomy of prevention activities.

[12] Teachers were only surveyed in middle and high schools.

[13] Students were only surveyed in middle and high schools.

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students' access to, and experiences with, drug use, violence, and other delinquent behavior; school climate, including fairness of rules and their enforcement; and correlates of problem behavior.

- **School district officials**[14] provided information on interactions with schools and the school personnel that operate prevention programming; amount and sources of prevention funding received by the district, distribution of funds to schools in the district, and limitations on uses of funding; and planning and evaluation of prevention programs.

Data Collection for the Second Phase

Conducting principal, provider, teacher, student, and district surveys was a complex task. Again, elementary schools were treated differently than middle and high schools, in that elementary schools were excluded from the teacher and student surveys.

Surveying Elementary School Staff. The principal was the first contact at elementary schools. He or she was asked to confirm that prevention activities reported in the screener survey were still in place. The provider and principal surveys were then sent to the school. Follow-up contacts were made when completed questionnaires were not quickly returned. In some cases, project staff asked the principal to name an individual to coordinate data collection efforts.

Surveying Middle and High School Staff and Students. When principals committed their schools to participating, they were asked to name an individual to serve as the school coordinator. In some cases, the principal was able to identify a coordinator immediately or chose to assume the coordinators' role themselves; in other cases, recruiters called back to learn who would serve as the coordinator. Principals were told that the coordinator could be anyone from a school counselor to a parent volunteer; and, if necessary, we would send Westat field staff to administer the surveys. No principals chose the Westat field staff option.

Once coordinators were identified, they were asked to complete a program review form to confirm that the prevention activities reported previously were still in place and a coordinator checklist that collected information about the student body (such as number of students per grade, average daily attendance, and percentage of students unable to read English at a sixth grade level). The checklist also collected information on the number of teachers at the school, expected student survey date, and last day of school. Finally, coordinators were asked to send a copy of their student roster so that we could sample students to be surveyed.

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[14] District officials were only surveyed in districts with one or more middle schools or high schools participating in the study.

We began sending study materials to middle and high schools in March 1998, soon after the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance was received. Data collection at elementary schools conducted by Gottfredson Associates under the NIJ grant had begun earlier.[15] These materials included an instruction manual for the coordinator, parental consent materials, questionnaires, answer sheets, cover letters to school staff, confidentiality envelopes, and machine-readable pencils for the student survey.

For the **staff survey**, the coordinator was instructed to distribute teacher questionnaires with our cover letter, an answer sheet, and a confidentiality envelope. They were given forms on which teachers were supposed to enter their names after completing the questionnaire. The coordinator's responsibilities also included distributing the principal questionnaires, and questionnaires to individuals who coordinated prevention activities (providers). For some schools, we selected a subset of program questionnaires for providers to complete. This generally was done where one person was responsible for coordinating multiple prevention activities.

For the **district official survey**, questionnaires were sent to SDFSCA coordinators as soon as school recruitment was complete. We only requested the participation of district officials in districts where at least one middle or high school was participating in the study. (The original analysis plan called for only analysis of data from middle and high schools for our report to ED. Information from elementary schools is also presented in this report.) Before questionnaires were mailed, every effort was made to identify the appropriate respondent. In a number of cases, the individual we had been told was the appropriate respondent was not, so we sent replacement questionnaires. District questionnaires were sent with cover letters and postage paid return envelopes. Respondents were prompted by mail and telephone to return surveys.

For the **student survey**, Westat staff developed a sampling algorithm that considered average daily attendance, percentage of students with low English proficiency, and expected response rate, and computed how many students needed to be sampled to yield 50 completed surveys. At schools with fewer than 50 students, all students were surveyed. After computing the sample size, the algorithm indicated which students should be selected (e.g., students 1, 7, 12, and 18). To get as representative a sample of the student body as possible, the roster was stratified by gender (or grade where gender stratification was not possible), and separate samples were drawn. We then selected the appropriate students from the roster and typed up the list of sampled students for mailing to the school with survey materials.

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[15] A memorandum of understanding between the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) specified that Westat, under contract to ED, and Gottfredson Associates (GA), the recipient of a grant from NIJ, would coordinate future data collection activities to minimize burden on respondents. The memorandum also stated that Westat and GA would share access to data and coordinate on conducting analyses of the data.

GA had begun its data collection activities prior to execution of the memorandum. (OMB clearance is generally not required for research conducted under a grant.) GA subsequently contracted with Westat to collect principal and provider data at the middle and high schools to reduce confusion and respondent burden.

In accordance with Westat's IRB, the parental consent materials were passive in nature. That is, if parents did not want their children to participate in the study, they could either call Westat's toll free hotline or return the consent postcard to us and we would notify the school of their decision; some schools instructed parents to call the coordinator directly to refuse consent. We asked that coordinators mail parental consent letters to the parents of sampled students two weeks before data collection was scheduled. We provided a letter to parents, envelopes for the mailing, a return postcard, and stamps. We suggested that, in addition to the letter from the study directors, schools enclose a cover letter introducing the study, and we also included a suggested format. Parents of approximately six percent of the sampled students refused to allow their children to participate.

To minimize student absenteeism, we requested that students not be surveyed on Mondays or Fridays and that they be surveyed toward the middle of the school day. Another important instruction to the coordinator was that students should be instructed to meet in place A where they were to be read a description of the study and be invited to go to place B if they agreed to participate. We asked coordinators to take this step so that students would truly know that their participation in the study was voluntary.

After allowing students the opportunity to refuse their consent, the coordinators distributed the questionnaires, answer sheets, confidentiality envelopes, and machine-readable pencils to the participating students. To protect student confidentiality, we asked that students not record their names on the answer sheets. In addition, we implemented procedures to discourage efforts to link personal identifying demographic information and other questionnaire responses. Demographic information was collected on the top part of the answer sheet; all other information was collected on the bottom part of the answer sheet. Students were instructed to separate the top and bottom parts of the answer sheet, seal the bottom part in the confidentiality envelope, and turn the top part in separately. While the answer sheets could be linked in analysis via machine-readable symbols, doing so manually would have been very difficult.

Response Rates

Of the 1,287 schools originally drawn from the Market Data Retrieval list, 69 percent completed the principal screener questionnaire in the first phase of data collection. The main reasons reported by principals for nonresponse include lack of time or interest and excessive respondent burden. These school-level response rates for the principal screener questionnaire are shown in Table A-1.

Table A-1. School-level response rates for the first phase of data collection

Disposition	Schools	
	Number	Percent
Complete	886	69
Nonresponse	401	31
Total sample	1,287	100

Because of the late start of recruitment and our inability to start data collection in middle and high schools until March when OMB clearance was received, fewer schools than desired were able to participate in the post-screener phase of data collection. Table A-2 illustrates the school level participation rates for the post-screener data collection. The response rate for schools that had previously completed the principal screener questionnaire was 77 percent.

Table A-2. School-level participation rates for the second phase of data collection

	All schools		Schools participating in screener survey*	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Participate	678	53	678	77
Refuse	609	47	208	23
Total sample	1,287	100	886	100

*We excluded 101 schools from the second phase of data collection due to district refusal.

Furthermore, not all the schools that participated were able to provide all the requested types of data. Table A-3 shows that 72 percent of eligible schools (i.e., those that had completed a principal screener questionnaire) provided principal data. Table A-4 shows that the provider response rate was 52 percent, Table A-5 shows the teacher response rate was 67 percent, and Table A-6 illustrates that the student response rate was 73 percent.

Table A-3. Principal response rate

Disposition	School	
	Number	Percent of eligible schools*
Complete	634	72
Nonresponse	252	28
Total schools	886	100

*Schools were eligible if they completed a screener survey form..

Table A-4. Provider response rate

Disposition	Provider	
	Number	Percent of eligible programs*
Completed	3,691	52
Nonresponse	3,413	48
Total sampled	7,104	100

*Programs were eligible if they completed a screener survey form.

Reasons for provider nonresponse include the following:

- Coordinator never distributed the questionnaires;
- Appropriate respondent was ill; and
- Could not locate appropriate respondent (e.g., appropriate respondent was not school staff and had completed work at the school for the year).

Table A-5. Teacher response rate

Disposition	Teachers	
	Number	Percent of eligible teachers*
Complete	13,842	67
Refusal	4,719	23
Nonresponse	1,470	7
Other	746	3
Total teachers	20,777	100

*Six teachers were ineligible.

Most of the nonresponse was a result of questionnaires not being distributed to all teachers. Reasons for "other" include the following:

- Teachers, who were also program providers, completed only provider questionnaires,
- Answer sheets completed in pen were unusable, and
- Transmittal not returned explaining reasons for incomplete surveys.

Table A-6. Student response rate

	Students	
Disposition	**Number**	**Percent of eligible students***
Complete	17,181	73
Refusal	762	3
Parent refusal	1,307	6
Absent	416	2
Nonresponse	2,254	10
Other	1,629	7
Total sampled	23,549	100

*Six hundred and three students were ineligible.

Coordinators indicated that much of the student nonresponse was due to teachers not releasing students from class to participate in the survey. In addition, approximately 3 percent of students refused to participate, in addition to those whose parents refused their consent. The exact nature of nonresponse was not reported for nearly 7 percent of the eligible sampled students.

We believe that both the student and teacher response rates would have been higher had field staff gone to the schools to collect the survey data; however, some schools might have refused to participate if a condition of participating was having an outsider come into the school to conduct data collection. We also believe that overall participation would have been greater if we had been able to send survey materials to these schools as soon as they had agreed to participate.

Relatively low response rates increase the potential for nonresponse bias. To examine this issue, Gottfredson et al. (2000) analyzed the associations between participating in several of the data collection components (e.g., screener, principal, teacher, and student surveys) and the characteristics of schools and the communities in which they are located (based on 1990 Census data aggregated at the zip code level). These associations indicate a relatively strong association between nonresponse and urban

89

location. That is, nonresponse tended to be higher for schools located in predominantly urban areas. School auspices (public, Catholic, or private sectarian or nonsectarian) also is strongly associated with nonresponse: Private schools tended to have higher levels of nonresponse than public or Catholic schools. Hence, schools located in urban areas and private schools are underrepresented in the responding schools. We sought to correct for the underepresentation through nonresponse adjustments to weights. However, to the extent that the nonresponding differed from other schools on the variables of interest, their absence may still influence the study results.

Data Processing

Processing the data that was returned from schools was done in three steps. First, clerks sorted the contents of each box. This was somewhat time intensive because all respondents had been instructed to seal questionnaires in confidentiality envelopes that then had to be opened. The second step was to log the contents of each box and note differences between expected data and actual data. These differences were resolved by the recruitment staff. In some cases, reasons for discrepancies were noted; in other cases, replacement surveys were sent to the school.

The third data processing step was to actually process the data. The principal and provider surveys were coded and keyed into a database at Gottfredson Associates. The school district surveys were coded and keyed into a database at Westat. The teacher and student answer sheets were processed by an optical scanning machine (also at Westat). The student forms were processed in their two component pieces. A program was written to match both halves of each data form. The program was unable to match all data forms, for example, because some students had marked in the machine-readable identification code. A clerk sorted through all of the data forms to resolve these problems.

Weighting

Weights were developed by project statisticians to reflect differential probabilities of selection and to adjust for nonresponse. The study weights are as follows:

- Screener 1 school-level nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe school characteristics,
- Screener 2 school-level nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe activity characteristics,

- Screener 3 school-level nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe activity characteristics (these weights incorporated supplemental data gathered during the detailed phase of data collection),
- Detailed principal questionnaire school-level nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe school and principal characteristics,
- School district questionnaire school-level nonresponse adjusted weights (adjusted with respect to school and school district official response rates)—to describe school characteristics,
- Student questionnaire **respondent-level** nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe characteristics of **students** nationally,
- Student questionnaire **school-level** nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe characteristics of **schools** nationally,
- Teacher questionnaire **respondent-level** nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe characteristics of **teachers** nationally,
- Teacher questionnaire **school-level** nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe characteristics of **schools** nationally,
- Activity (provider[16]) questionnaire **activity-level** nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe characteristics of prevention activities nationally, and
- Activity (provider) questionnaire **school-level** nonresponse adjusted weights—to describe characteristics of schools nationally,

The computation of these weights was a multistage process. First, base-weights were developed for every sampled school based on the probability with which the school was sampled. Then, a nonresponse adjustment was applied to the base-weights for each type of set of school-level weights (one for each instrument) to compensate for the number of schools that did not participate in that aspect of data collection. For the types of instruments that were completed by multiple respondents at a school, a respondent base-weight (based on the number of possible respondents) was created. Then, a second nonresponse adjustment was applied to the respondent-level base-weights to compensate for nonresponse within a school, in the case of student and teacher weights; or within category, in the case of the activity weights. Additionally, before the within respondent student and teacher nonresponse adjustments, an algorithm was applied to help decide whether or not each school had sufficient responses to consider the school responding in that category.

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[16] Although we have referred to the survey on prevention efforts as provider questionnaires (because they were completed by prevention providers), the survey collected information on the actual programs and activities. They were also weighted to describe the characteristics of the prevention activities themselves.

School-level Nonresponse Adjustment. The nonresponse adjustments were performed for all data types by forming nonresponse cells at the school level based on sampling strata and the predictors of school-level response propensity. The predictors of school-level response included school size, type of school (i.e., public and Catholic schools versus other types of private schools), and grade levels covered by the school (i.e., whether a high school served 10th through 12th graders or some other combination of grade levels).

Multiple Respondent Response Rate Adjustment. For students, teachers, and program providers to represent their universes (i.e., all middle and high school students, all middle and high school teachers, all prevention activities nationally), the respondent level files were adjusted based on within unit sampling fractions. As noted, student samples were drawn with the intent of receiving 50 completed student questionnaires, regardless of whether the school had 50 students or 5,000 students. Hence, each responding student typically represented a number of other students in the school. Within each school, student weights were also adjusted based on how many of the sampled students actually responded.

We had asked that all teachers in each middle and high school complete teacher questionnaires. Some schools did, in fact, return surveys for 100 percent of the teachers, but more typically, 60 percent to 80 percent of teachers participated. Within each school, the teacher base-weights were adjusted for the nonresponding teachers.

As noted, more than 8,000 prevention activities were named by school principals. Project staff decided to ask a school to complete one provider survey within a given category. Hence, only 7,104 provider surveys were actually sent to schools. In addition, within a school, we sometimes drew a subsample of surveys so as not to overburden program providers. Weights were adjusted for these factors and for nonresponse within each of the 14 categories of prevention activities.

Respondent-level Nonresponse Adjustment. The respondent-level, nonresponse adjustment was done separately for the student, teacher, and provider (activity) surveys. For the student survey, the respondent-level, nonresponse adjustment was a multistage process. Student sampling had generally been performed by stratifying students by either grade or gender; hence, these were critical values for the weighting process. In some cases, because of data loss from the perforated student response forms, a respondent's grade and gender were not known. Missing values for grade and gender were "replaced" with imputed values. We then dropped students who had responded to less than 80 percent of the data items. After dropping these deficient records, a nonresponse adjustment was performed based on either gender or grade level, depending on how the sample was drawn. Hence, the responding male students in a school, for example, represented all male students in that school. This adjustment was performed only on schools judged to have a sufficient response rate. The response criterion was as follows: (1) total number of students in a school is 11 or more and the estimated proportion of responding students is more than 40 percent, or (2) total number of students in a school is less than 11 and the proportion of responding students is more than 70 percent.

In computing weights for the teacher survey, teachers who responded to a low number of items in the teacher questionnaire (less than 60%) were treated as nonrespondents. Then school response status was assigned based on the number and proportion of responding teachers in each sampled school. A school was defined as a responding school with regard to the teacher survey if (1) total number of teachers in a school is 12 or more and the proportion of responding teachers is 25 percent or more; or (2) total number of teachers in a school is less than 12 and the proportion of responding teachers is 50 percent or more. By this rule, we defined about 5 percent of schools with at least one responding teacher as nonrespondents.

The procedure for the activity-level nonresponse adjustment was similar to the procedure for the respondent level non-response adjustment.

Analysis

Once the data were cleaned and weighted, Gottfredson Associates and Westat staff conducted three types of analyses. These are: (1) data reduction and psychometric analysis (e.g., reliability and validity analysis); (2) descriptive statistics (e.g., measures of central tendency, dispersion, maximum and minimum values, and frequencies); and (3) inferential statistics (e.g., tests of differences between groups). Although each technique is potentially very useful, regardless of the statistical procedures used, none can be used to establish cause and effect relationships.

One of the first steps in conducting the data analysis was to create composite measures made up of several different questions from a given questionnaire. Many of these measures had been used in earlier studies or designed as part of instrument development by Gottfredson Associates. Gottfredson Associates staff also performed psychometric (reliability and validity) analyses to assess the reliability and validity of the measures. They examined internal consistency measures such as Cronbach's alpha and/or split-half correlations on the measures.

In order to describe characteristics of the prevention activities, schools, and the districts, we computed descriptive statistics. These statistics, which primarily used weighted data, included frequencies and measures of central tendency (such as the mean or median) for individual questionnaire items and composite scores. The descriptive statistics were also broken down by instructional level, urbanicity, and other variables of interest.

In addition to descriptive statistics, we computed inferential statistics to examine whether or not a statistical relationship occurred by chance. While some of the research questions for the study were easily answered using descriptive statistics, others can only be answered using inferential statistics. These analyses focused on associations between continuous variables (e.g., correlations) and differences between groups (e.g., chi-square tests and t-tests). To perform the inferential analyses correctly with weighted data, we used WesVar® for Complex Samples, which is a special software application that was designed by Westat to correctly calculate standard errors when using weighted data.

APPENDIX B. METHODS AND CRITERIA FOR JUDGING THE ADEQUACY OF PREVENTION PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES

This appendix describes our approach to assessing the quality of school-based prevention programs or activities and the quality of school-wide discipline practices. It includes a description of the adequacy cut points (criteria) that we used in the assessment of quality.

Quality of School-Based Prevention Programing and Criteria Used to Judge Adequacy

For the Study on School Violence and Prevention, Westat and Gottfredson Associates (GA) sought to assess the quality of school-based prevention programming. This entailed several critical steps, including: (1) defining 10 dimensions that are on rational or empirical grounds expected to influence the likelihood that a program will achieve a measurable effect; (2) within each dimension and separately for 14 categories of prevention programs (e.g., prevention curriculum, instruction, or training; recreation, enrichment, or leisure; and mentoring), establishing criteria for the designation of "adequate" quality; and (3) comparing implementer reports about operating programs against the criteria. In other words, we conducted a criterion-based assessment, judging quality by comparing program performance against standards.

Concern with the measurement of quality is based on the findings of research that indicates that the quality of program implementation, in prevention programs and educational innovations more broadly, can be highly variable and is critical to achieving desired effects. For example, G. D. Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Czeh, Cantor, Crosse, and Hantman (2000) refer to research conducted by Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Tortu, and Botvin (1990) that found tremendous variability in the fidelity of implementation of Life Skills Training and the deleterious effects of poor implementation. More extensive discussions of the problem of poor program implementation and program ineffectiveness may be found in reports by D. C. Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Skroban (1998); D. C. Gottfredson, Fink, Skroban, & Gottfredson, 1997; G. D. Gottfredson, Jones, & Gore (in press); and Jones, Gottfredson, & Gottfredson (1997).

No comprehensive measures of program quality applicable to all kinds of programs have ever been developed. To meet the need for survey-based measures of quality in the present research, we have defined quality in terms of 10 indicators that capture both program intensity and adherence to best practices. These dimensions are as follows: (1) level of use by school personnel, (2) best practices for content, (3) best practices for methods, (4) frequency of operation, (5) number of lessons or sessions, (6) duration, (7) frequency of student participation, (8) frequency of staff participation, 9) ratio of providers to students in the schools, and (10) proportion of students exposed or participating. Hence, an adequate or "good" prevention program (i.e., program that is likely to achieve measurable effects) is one that achieves a specific minimum threshold on each of these dimensions. These 10 measures of program quality and the range of responses appear in Table B-1.

Table B-1. Measures of program quality

Measures	Possible range of responses
Level of use by school personnel	Ranges from "1" (at least one person in the school knows something about it) to "5" (one or more persons is conducting the activity on a regular basis)
Best practices for methods	Ranges from 0 to 100 percent[*]
Best practices for content	Ranges from 0 to 100 percent[*]
Frequency of operation	Ranges from "1" (special occasions once or twice a year) to "3" (continually throughout the year)
Number of lessons and sessions	This question had an open response category in which the respondent could write in the exact number of lessons or sessions
Duration	Ranges from "1" (less than a day) to "7" (more than a full school year)
Frequency of participation by students	Ranges from "1" (monthly or less often) to "6" (more than once a day)
Frequency of participation by staff	Ranges from "1" (monthly or less often) to "6" (more than once a day)
Ratio of providers to students in the school	100 $(\ln(N_p/N_s+1))$, where N_p= number of persons providing the service and N_s= the number of students in the school
Proportion of students exposed or participating	Generally, N_e/N_s, where N_e= number of students exposed or participating and N_s= number of students in the school. For the category youth participation in school decision making, N_e= disciplinary incidents handled by student court of peer mediation and N_s= disciplinary incidents handled by student court, peer mediation, or the administration

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[*] Scores for the best practices scales are the proportion of the identified best practices (content or methods) reportedly used in a particular activity or program. For example, for the program activity prevention curriculum, instruction, or training, the program provider was asked about the use of 10 best practices, such as use of rewards for group accomplishments, student recognition for effort expended, and assessment of student mastery and reteaching material not mastered. Following this example, if a program provider reported using 4 of the 10 best practices, the curriculum, instruction, or training program would receive a score of 0.40 (4 divided by 10) for the best practices for methods measure.

The importance of some of these indicators is self-evident. Level of use of a program is important, because if no one is using a program it can have no influence. Frequency of staff participation is important for the same reason. If school personnel seldom operate a program, it cannot have much effect on anything. Interventions of very brief duration cannot be expected to have much influence on levels of problem behavior (which tends to be enduring characteristics of persons and subject to powerful influences by peers) on the basis of rational analysis as well as general evidence about the relation of dose to program effectiveness (Lipsey, 1992). Accordingly, number of lessons, duration, and frequency of student participation are obviously related to a program's potential to influence problem behavior. Other indicators of potential program quality are more tentative. We measured the proportion of students exposed to or participating in programs on the grounds that an intervention that reaches only a small number of individuals will generally leave most of the population unaffected. Ratio of providers to students is a similar indicator: if a very large number of students relative to the number of providers engage in a prevention activitiy, that program's influence is likely to be diluted.

The importance of other indicators is induced from a reading of the literature reporting on evaluations of specific programs. For instructional programs, meta-analytic literature reviews (Tobler, 1986; Tobler & Stratton, 1997) as well as an examination of the primary literature imply that programs involving the use of cognitive-behavioral instructional approaches tend to be more effective that programs that omit these approaches (also called "interactive" approaches by Tobler). In some areas, a research literature makes the identification of a least some "best practices" an unambiguous task. This is certainly true for instruction, behavioral, and classroom management programs where a great deal of literature exists on effective interventions (see generally Slavin, 1997, on instruction; Emmer, Evertson, Clements, & Worsham, 1994, on classroom management; and Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995, on behavioral interventions).

In other areas, little or no scientific literature is available to guide the induction of best practices. This is true of recreation or enrichment activities, for example, where no credible literature implies the effectiveness of such programs for preventing problem behavior and very little in the way of published guidance or recommendations from experienced practitioners. In such cases, we specified no best practices and measured none in the present research.

Between these two extremes are program areas where guidance in the form of established professional opinion exists. For example, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists in training are taught to base intervention on an assessment of the problem, establish treatment goals, and follow up on progress. This guidance did form the basis of specification of some best practices, because it is sensible to regard an intervention with objectives as likely to be more effective than one without objectives.

Because of the unevenness of the literature on best practices in different categories of preventive intervention, best practices are not measured in several of the categories. In these categories, the assessment of quality rests solely on indicators such as duration, frequency, and level of use that can generally be assessed for any kind of intervention.

GA also identified thresholds for "adequacy" that varied by the 14 categories of prevention activities or programs. Tables B-2 and B-3 show the minimum criteria necessary to be judged adequate on each of nine measures of program quality. (One of the quality measures does not have corresponding adequacy criteria.) Given the diversity of prevention activities, developing separate criteria was necessary. For example, the criterion for adequate duration was longer than a month for the prevention curriculum, instruction, or training program category (where instructional programs of less than six week's duration are seldom found to have substantial effects). In contrast, the criterion for duration was at least one school year for the mentoring category (where the single credible evaluation implying the effectiveness of mentoring was of a carefully implemented program of a full year's duration [Tierney et al., 1995]). In developing the "adequacy" criteria for each dimension of quality and each program activity, Gary Gottfredson and Denise Gottfredson, experts in the field of delinquency and violence prevention in schools, independently indicated the level for each criterion. They based their judgements on their understanding of the research (reviewed in an extensive manner by D. C. Gottfredson, 1997, 2001; and D. C. Gottfredson, Wilson, and Najaka, in press) for each program category; for categories that lacked sufficient research on which to base an assessment, they exercised their judgments. The raters discussed and resolved any discrepancies on ratings. In assessing the reasonableness of these ratings, readers may wish to consult the detailed account of the cutting scores for adequacy spelled out in the full report (G. D. Gottfredson et al., 2000). A summary rating was also developed based on the fraction of the separate dimensions of quality that were judged to be adequate. This summary rating is extremely conservative – often calling for only a fraction of the individual ratings to be "adequate." By this lenient standard, a program may be judged "adequate" if it meets several criteria even if no one is implementing it on a regular basis.

In the final step, Westat and GA collected and analyzed survey data from a national probability sample of program providers using program-specific instruments that measured each dimension of quality. That is, the researchers developed and used 14 different instruments that corresponded to the 14 categories of prevention activities. In their analyses, the researchers assessed the performance of each program against the criterion for each dimension of quality. They summarized the results in terms of program category and dimension of quality. Readers need not rely solely on the "adequacy" ratings in interpreting the data on program quality. The underlying quantitative data – not dichotomized using any cutting scores – are available in a longer report (G. D. Gottfredson et al., 2000).

Table B-2. Criteria used to assess adequacy or best practices for quality measures that have similar criteria across program or activity types

Quality measures with common minimum criteria across program or activity types	Minimum criteria required to be judged adequate
Level of use by school personnel	For all program types: minimum criteria needed to be judged as adequate is defined as at least "one or more persons is conducting the activity on a regular basis"
Best practice for methods	For all program types where best practices: methods could be established, 70 percent or more of possible best practices used (see footnote on previous page) is needed for the program to be judged adequate
Best practices for content	For all program types where best practices: methods could be established, 70 percent or more of possible best practices used (see footnote on previous page) is needed for the program to be judged adequate

Table B-3. Criteria used to assess adequacy or best practices for quality measures that have different criteria across program or activity types*

Quality measures with different minimum criteria across program or activity types	Minimum criteria required to be judged adequate
Number of lessons and sessions for	
Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training	Greater than or equal to 16
Mentoring	Greater than or equal to 52
Tutoring	Greater than or equal to 26
Recreation, enrichment, leisure	Greater than or equal to 26
Improvements to instruct practices/methods	Greater than or equal to 30
External personnel resources for classroom	Greater than or equal to 25
Duration	
Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training	More than 1 month
Counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic activity	More than 1 month
Tutoring	More than 1 month
Recreation, enrichment, leisure	More than 1 month
Mentoring	At least 1 school year
Planning structure or management of change; security and surveillance	More than 1 full school year
Frequency of participation for students	
Culture, climate or expectations	At least 2 to 3 times per month
Intergroup relations and school-community interaction	At least 2 to 3 times per month
Planning structure or management of change	At least 2 to 3 times per month
Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training	At least weekly
Counseling, social work, psychological, or therapeutic activity	At least weekly
Mentoring, tutoring, coaching, apprenticeship	At least weekly
Recreation, enrichment, leisure	At least weekly
Services/programs for family members	At least weekly
External personnel resources for classroom	At least weekly
Improvements to instructional practices	More than once per week
Behavioral programming or behavioral modeling	At least daily
Security and surveillance	At least daily
Frequency of participation by staff	
Culture, climate or expectations	At least 2 to 3 times per month
Intergroup relations and school-community interaction	At least 2 to 3 times per month
Planning structure or management of change	At least 2 to 3 times per month
Security and surveillance	At least daily
Frequency of operation	
Culture, climate or expectations	Continually throughout the year
Intergroup relations and school-community interaction	Continually throughout the year
Planning structure or management of change	Continually throughout the year
Security and surveillance	Continually throughout the year
Proportion students exposed or participating	
Culture, climate, or expectations	Greater than or equal to 70%
Intergroup relations and school community interaction	Greater than or equal to 70%
Youth participation in discipline	Greater than or equal to 10% of referrals handled by student court or through peer mediation

* Not all quality measures apply to all program types.

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Quality of School-wide Disciplinary Practices and Criteria Used to Judge Adequacy

In a parallel process, we also conducted a criterion-based assessment for measuring quality of school-wide disciplinary practices, judging quality by comparing practices against standards. Quality of school-wide discipline practices consists of five measures: (1) communication and documentation, (2) range of appropriate responses to misconduct, (3) range of responses to desirable conduct, (4) disciplinarian consistency, and (5) predictable disciplinary decision making. (See Table B-4.) The items that make up each of the five scales and the cut points necessary for an adequacy or best practices rating were developed by the same two experts in the field of delinquency and violence prevention in schools mentioned in the previous section. These two researchers have published extensively in this area (e.g., see Gottfredson, D.C., 1997; Gottfredson, D.C., 2001; Gottfredson, G.D. and Gottfredson, D.C., 1985) and are familiar with the extant literature.

For a school to be judged adequate or using best practices on the first four measures listed, 70 percent of the responses to the items that make up the measure must be the desired responses. Desired responses are those that have been shown in the research literature to be the best approach (or best practice) for that particular area of school-wide discipline. An example of the category "best practices for range of appropriate responses to misconduct" would be evidence of a great variety of appropriate responses to misconduct. Using the communication and documentation scale as an example, responses for five of the seven items (71%) need to be the desired responses for a school to receive a best practices or adequacy rating on the communication and documentation scale. For the fifth measure, predictable disciplinary decision making, the average response to two questions on how often teachers and students can predict the administration's disciplinary response must be equal to or greater than (where a "4" means that it can be predicted most of the time, and a "5" means that it can be predicted almost always).

Table B-4. Measures of quality for school-wide discipline practices and cut points for assessing adequacy

Measure	Explanation	Possible range of responses	Cut point for adequacy
Best practices for communication and documentation	This measure is made up of seven items about the extent of distribution of the school's discipline policy and current efforts to maintain or use procedures for documentation. Higher percentages mean that more sound communication and documentation practices are employed.	0 to 100%	70%
Best practices for range of appropriate responses to misconduct	This measure is made up of 17 items about a variety of potential responses to misconduct the schools might exercise, ranging from brief exclusion from class, to use of peer mediation or student court, detention, reprimands, and to notifying parents to community service. A higher percentage means that a greater variety of appropriate responses are employed.	0 to 100%	70%
Best practices for range of appropriate responses to desirable conduct	The range of appropriate responses to desirable conduct scale is made up of seven items about the variety of potential responses to desirable student behavior that a school might exercise, ranging from material rewards through informal recognition or praise, activity or privilege reinforcers, to formal recognition or praise. A higher percentage means that a greater variety of potential reinforcers are used.	0 to 100%	70%
Best practices for disciplinarian consistency	Made up of three items, this scale is about whether specific disciplinary responses are independent of the source of referral, identity of the decision maker, or the student disciplined. Higher percentages mean the disciplinarian(s) is/are administering discipline with greater consistency.	0 to 100%	70%
Best practices for predictable disciplinary decisionmaking	This short scale is made up of the average of two Likert-type items that assess whether students and teachers can predict the administration's disciplinary response. The responses are on a scale from 1 to 5, where a "4" = most of the time and a "5" = almost always. Higher scores imply greater predictability.	1 to 5	4

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A CLOSER LOOK AT DRUG AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

REPORT ON THE STUDY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION

A CLOSER LOOK AT DRUG AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

REPORT ON THE STUDY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION

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U.S. Department of Education
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104 A

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

As part of the 1994 reauthorization of SDFSCA, Congress mandated that the U.S. Department of Education (ED) collect information on efforts to prevent violence in schools nationally. Consequently, ED initiated the Study on School Violence and Prevention to describe the level of problem behavior, including violence, in schools; to learn about the measures that schools are taking to prevent problem behavior and promote school safety; and to examine the use of funds allocated through SDFSCA.

The Study on School Violence and Prevention was a cooperative effort between the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice (NIJ). At the same time that ED commissioned the Study on School Violence and Prevention, NIJ awarded a grant to conduct the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools. To maximize resources and minimize the burden to schools, the agencies and external researchers agreed to merge many of the study activities. In this report, we refer to the project as the Study on School Violence and Prevention; in NIJ and other publications, the project is called the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools.

This report focuses on one of three study components, referred to as the "intensive level." It is the first study in over 20 years to examine in detail what schools are doing to promote school safety. While the intensive level component is an in-depth examination of a limited number of schools, the two other study components (national and intermediate level components) are based on broad surveys of national probability samples of schools. This report is organized in accordance with the topics covered by the study questions:

- Extent of problem behavior in schools, including the types of victimization experienced by students and teachers, and how students and teachers perceive the safety of their schools. Also included is a description of incident reporting systems.
- Efforts used by schools to prevent problem behavior and the quality of their implementation. These efforts include formal curricular programs as well as disciplinary practices and policies, and security measures. Observations on school climate are presented here.
- Planning processes used by schools and districts for prevention activities and the use of information (e.g., on effectiveness) in doing so.

- Results of efforts to compare schools that differed on the extent of problem behavior. These results allowed us to consider the characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools.

Method

The intensive level study gathered extensive qualitative and quantitative information from a purposive sample of 40 schools (20 middle schools and 20 senior high schools). All of these schools were among the over 230 schools that surveyed students during 1998 as part of an earlier phase of the study. We limited our selection to public secondary schools. In selecting the schools, we sought to include schools that varied on instructional level (middle schools and senior high schools), number of students enrolled (small and large schools), and metropolitan status (urban, suburban, and rural schools). In addition, we selected earlier schools that varied on safety, based primarily on information obtained from our surveys of principals, teachers, and students.

We collected qualitative and quantitative information from diverse sources at each of the 40 schools in the intensive level study. The primary vehicle for collecting this information was three-day site visits to the schools. While at the schools, site visitors made systematic observations; reviewed records on incidents of violence; conducted focus groups with teachers and students; and conducted in-depth interviews with district officials, principals, and school staff. In addition, we surveyed all teachers and a sample of students.

One of the strengths of this study is that it combines quantitative and qualitative information from a wide variety of sources. The quantitative information represents each school with fairly high precision. The qualitative information provides, from multiple perspectives, details and insights that are typically unavailable with surveys. A limitation of the study is that the sample varied little on the measures of safety we used for the intensive level. As a result, this limited our ability to compare and contrast characteristics that distinguish safe from unsafe schools.

Key Findings

Disorder in Schools

Overall, the site visitors found that the vast majority of the schools have relatively low levels of serious crime[1]. This was borne out by the surveys of students and teachers. While fighting did occur and the presence of weapons was not unheard of, the combination of the two was rarely seen in the same school. Theft was much more common than robbery, and while teachers may have been verbally abused, they very rarely were attacked or threatened with a weapon.

Fear of disorder did not seem to interfere with the learning process. Even though the schools visited were predominantly free of serious violence, less serious incidents still could have contributed to apprehension about being in school. This did not seem to be the case, however, in most of the schools included in the study. Site visitors at roughly two-thirds of the schools unanimously described their schools as safe or very safe, with low or very low levels of disorder. Similarly, about a third of the site visitors reported that the schools they visited were completely orderly and safe. Only one site visiting team characterized their school as "unsafe."

While most schools followed similar discipline procedures, they varied quite a bit in how they recorded and used incident data. A review of the systems in place in the schools included in the site visits found that:

- Collection forms vary widely among schools,
- Serious incidents usually are reported to the district or state, and
- Victims and offenders are rarely reported in systems.

At most schools, disciplinary information was reviewed informally within the school. Principals and teachers were usually aware of the most prevalent types of disorder at their schools as well as which students were more likely to cause trouble. However, few schools had specific procedures in place to review incident data. In addition, very few schools seemed to follow guidelines recommended in 1996 by the National Center for Education Statistics task force on the collection and compilation of incident data. Neither the level of detail collected on particular incidents nor the unit of collection

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[1] As used, "serious crime" refers to crimes such as aggravated assault, weapons violations, and robbery.

(incident, victim, and offender) seemed to be in place in most schools to support the unit-based collection system recommended by the task force.

Efforts to Prevent Problem Behavior

We described efforts to prevent problem behavior in terms of the following major categories: (a) prevention activities, (b) school security, (c) school discipline practices and policies, and (d) school climate.

Prevention Activities. The review in this report is based on classifying prevention activities into 19 different types of programs using categories developed for an earlier phase of this study, which is based on national survey data (Gottfredson et al., 2000; Crosse, Burr, Cantor & Hantman, forthcoming). Our findings amplified those of the intermediate level study in that many programs discussed by site visitors did not meet minimal quality criteria along a number of basic characteristics, including financial support, frequency of participation by students, and monitoring and evaluation. These problems, we believe, reflect a view on the part of the schools that prevention programs do not generally play a critical role in preventing problem behavior in the school. In fact, many of the programs are being implemented within schools that are perceived as being relatively safe and not in great need of such programs. Particularly noticeable in these programs was the absence of data that documented the implementation process, as well as any formal or informal evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs.

School Security. The description of school security was divided into three areas: (a) school security staff, (b) law enforcement personnel, and (c) security devices and strategies. School security was the most common type of activity that administrators reported as specifically set up to prevent disorder in the school. The most prevalent security strategy used throughout the schools was various ways to monitor student and non-student movement within the school. The staff and administrators were primarily responsible for this task. Generally, other types of security strategies--such as hiring special security personnel, use of metal detectors, and random searches--were also used by a smaller number of schools. These additional strategies tended to be implemented in those schools where student movement and, perhaps safety, may be more of an issue (large, urban schools).

The implementation of many of these strategies was inconsistent. For example, site visitors observed a number of times when hall monitors were not consistently enforcing rules and procedures (e.g., use of hall passes). Several site visitors found locks, intended to keep people out, that were broken. Video cameras, when they were in place, were not widely monitored by staff.

School Discipline Practices and Policies. We found considerable overlap in discipline procedures across schools. The rules were generally guided by the school district and involved varying levels of punishment as the offenses became more serious. Very few rewards were structured into the procedures. Schools seemed to have few problems with communicating the rules to all students. However, we found some evidence that rules are inconsistently enforced across students. How common inconsistent enforcement was across relatively minor and serious infractions is unclear. Many of these inconsistencies may stem from the general process of letting teachers handle many of the infractions within the classroom. As noted by a number of administrators, teachers do vary on how they deal with disorder problems. Much of the inconsistency reported by students may be related to these differences in individual style across teachers and other staff.

School Climate. We described school climate using a typology based on the school climate goals outlined by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement [OERI] (1993) and Kelly et al. (1986).

Staff/student relationships. The majority of the sites reported good communication between staff and students, although examples of high and low quality communication are described in the report. Site visitors observed that highly visible, communicative, and engaging principals had schools with some of the strongest climate relations. Students often described these principals as caring, approachable, and fair. Conversely, principals in schools with poor climate were often described by teachers and students as non-collaborative, unapproachable, unengaged and intimidating.

Goals. With respect to school goals, the schools in our sample were classified into four different types: (a) strong focus on academics, (b) focus on academics but struggling to improve performance, (c) mixed academic reputation but a strong emphasis on controlling disorder, and (d) great deal of emphasis on extra-curricular aspects.

Rules and procedures. Schools were described as having two basic approaches to rules and procedures. One was where teachers tended to deal with all but the most serious discipline problems, including setting punishment and calling parents (if necessary). The second approach tended to deal with small infractions within the classroom and then refer students to an administrator for repeated or more serious infractions. The administrator was responsible for assigning punishment and contacting parents. Regardless of the approach, consistency of rule enforcement emerged as an important issue, especially among students (as expressed in the focus groups). This also re-emphasized the role of the principal in setting the overall tone in a school when it came to discipline and enforcement of rules. School staff expressed more satisfaction if the principal set clear expectations, communicated regularly with staff, and gave them a voice in management issues.

Facilities and environment. Most of the schools were described as being clean, both inside and outside. Vandalism was rarely seen. Some variety was found in the condition of the buildings. The community environments sometimes contrasted with the school. In this sense, some schools were clearly "safe-havens" for the students.

Planning

The study team developed a definition of sound planning and applied it when selecting six schools for detailed analysis. Once selected, the schools were contacted and asked to elaborate on the information that was initially elicited in the national survey. Respondents were asked about the kinds of school-level planning structures, the main functions of these structures, and the outcomes of the planning.

The kinds of school-level planning structures varied across schools. Regardless of variability, however, all of the schools had at least one school-level planning structure that regularly assessed (through formal or informal needs assessments) the need for reduction or prevention of problem behavior. This did not necessarily result in implementing prevention activities.

Distinguishing Middle Schools with Different Levels of Disorder

To conduct this analysis, a limited number of schools were identified as having "high" and "low" levels of disorder using the data from the student surveys. Schools were compared across the high and low disorder groups along school characteristics, community characteristics, prevention programs, security, discipline, and climate. This comparison was intended to identify policy-relevant factors that distinguished schools with high and low levels of disorder, with the intent of suggesting approaches that policy-makers and school personnel may wish to pursue to increase school safety.

Complicating this analysis was the fact that, as a whole, the 40 schools in our sample tended to have relatively low levels of disorder. Middle schools tended to have higher levels of disorder than high schools. For the high schools, less than five percent of students in the low disorder schools had experienced being robbed or threatened with a weapon; approximately 16 percent of students in the high disorder schools were victims of such violent incidents. This range (11%) was exceeded by the range for the middle schools (33%). Between 28 and 37 percent of students in high disorder middle schools experienced one or more violent incidents. Because of the limited range in disorder among the high schools, this analysis was restricted to middle schools.

What seemed to most clearly distinguish the high and low disorder schools? Not surprisingly, school and community characteristics were clearly important. The high disorder schools tended to have higher levels of poverty, unemployment, and other risk factors associated with community disorder. Schools that were ranked high on disorder tended to have more programs specifically targeting reduction of problem behavior and had considerably more security arrangements (e.g., school security devices). This seemed to be driven primarily by the level of perceived need of the school. Low disorder schools did not allocate their resources towards prevention programs when they did not feel it was warranted. This is especially true for security devices.

The most important policy-relevant differences between the two groups of middle schools were related to discipline practices and climate. Low disorder schools were characterized by several important characteristics, including strong principals, school staff viewing themselves as working as a team, active involvement of teachers in maintaining order inside and outside the classroom, and generally positive relationships among staff and students. In contrast, high disorder schools lacked a clear approach to discipline, did not convey expectations to students well, and demonstrated poor communication between teachers and administrators.

This last result reinforces the finding that managing a school and the effects of this management on school climate is vitally important to keeping schools safe and secure. While programs to prevent violence undoubtedly play some role in reducing violence, very little evidence from this study indicated that this is what distinguishes schools with high and low levels of disorder. In fact, this study suggests that the use of prevention programs is, in part, a reaction to disorder. As a result, schools with higher levels of disorder seem to implement more prevention programs than schools with lower levels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY i

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 1
Historical Context and Literature Review 1
Study on School Violence and Prevention and Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Program 2
Study Questions 3
Overview of Study Design and Report Organization 4

2 METHODS 6
Intensive Level School Selection 6
Data Collection 6
Analysis 7
Strengths and Limitations 7

3 DISORDER IN SCHOOLS 9
Methods 9
Disorder in the Schools 10
Perceptions of Safety and Disorder 16
Incident Reporting and Monitoring in Schools 17

4 EFFORTS TO PREVENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR 25
Violence Prevention Activities 25
School Security 40
School Discipline Practices and Policies 49
School Climate 58

5 PLANNING 65
Characteristics of Planning Structures 66
Factors Associated with Development of Planning Structures 68
Summary and Discussion 70

6 DISTINGUISHING MIDDLE SCHOOLS WITH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF DISORDER 72
Method 72
Describing Middle Schools with Different Levels of Disorder 74
What Makes a Difference? 78
References 81

APPENDIX A 83

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

List of Tables

Table		Page
4-1	Prevention Activity Categories and Definitions	26
4-2	School Wide Arrangements and Definitions	28

List of Exhibits

Exhibit		
4-1	Examples of Schools with good Student/Staff Relationships	59
6-1	Profiles of Low Disorder Middle Schools	74
6-2	Profiles of High Disorder Middle Schools	76

A Closer Look at Drug and Violence Prevention Efforts in American Schools

Report on the Study on School Violence and Prevention

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

Concern about youth violence has increased dramatically across the country. This has been especially true for violence that occurs in schools. Schools should provide disciplined and orderly environments that are conducive to learning and should be safe havens from violence. This report examines the status of school safety in a cross-section of 40 public secondary schools; it also assesses what schools are doing to promote safety and prevent problem behavior.

Historical Context and Literature Review

In recent years, the murder of students in a Littleton, Colorado high school and in a half dozen other schools have led to a sense of great urgency to understand school violence and ensure school safety. These tragic events seized public attention, in part, because they occurred in settings that we usually associate with safety: schools in rural or suburban communities. As a result, many parents began to question the safety of their own children in their local schools. For example, seven months after the Columbine deaths, 60 percent of Americans indicated that school safety "worried them a great deal" (Brooks et al., 2000). Policy-makers and parents demanded action that could stem what they perceived as a crisis situation, in spite of the fact that, as most available data indicate, schools are relatively safe places.

In the last decade, several studies have investigated the prevalence of school crime and some of the factors associated with it. For example, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice (2000) report that 50 school-associated violent deaths occurred nationally during the complete 1998-99 school

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year[2], which is down from the 60 school-associated violent deaths reported by Kaufman et al. (2000) for the previous school year[3] (see also Stephens, 1999 and U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 1999). Of the 60 school-associated deaths reported in the 1997-98 school year, 42 involved student homicides or suicides (Kaufman et al, 2000). As a point of comparison, approximately 4,771 young people between the ages of 5-19 were victims of homicide or suicide in non-school settings during the 1997-98 school year (Kaufman et al, 2000). Other studies that have investigated school crime include: Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97 (Heaviside, Rowand, Williams, & Farris, 1998); Violence-Related Attitudes and Behaviors of High School Students—New York City, 1992 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993); Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999); and School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (Chandler et al., 1998). For the most part, these studies have found that the more serious types of school crime (e.g., violence with a weapon) is relatively rare, though less serious types of crime (e.g., theft and physical fights without weapons) are much more prevalent. For example, Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97 (Heaviside et al, 1998) indicated that approximately 10 percent of public elementary and secondary schools reported one or more serious crimes (i.e., murder, rape or other type of sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon, or robbery) to the police, while 57 percent of schools reported any incident of school crime.

In response to concerns about school crime, researchers and school personnel have developed and implemented a wide variety of prevention and treatment interventions. Some of these interventions are geared towards individuals, potential victims or offenders; other interventions focus on the school environment, for example, seeking to increase "guardianship" in the schools. Some of these interventions have been evaluated under controlled conditions and produced encouraging outcomes. (See Gottfredson et al., 2000.) However, little is known about the types and number of prevention efforts currently being implemented in schools. In addition, while we know that interventions are only as effective as they are well implemented, research on the implementation quality of these school-based interventions has been rare.

Study on School Violence and Prevention and Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Program

The Study on School Violence and Prevention was developed to increase understanding of some of the issues surrounding school safety and prevention efforts as well as to meet congressional reporting requirements linked to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) Program. As the largest school-based federal program directed at preventing student drug use and promoting school safety, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Program has been instrumental in funding school-based prevention efforts. This program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), provides funding to states, each of which has both a state education agency (SEA) program and a Governor's program. The SEAs distribute almost all of the funds to local school districts; 70 percent of these funds go to school districts by formula (based on relative student enrollments), and the remaining 30 percent of funds go to districts that have the greatest needs for additional funds to implement prevention programs. The Governor's programs award grants to community agencies and public and private nonprofit entities. The districts and other grantees support prevention activities at the school and community levels.

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[2] July 1, 1998-June 30, 1999.

[3] July 1, 1997-June 30, 1998.

As part of the 1994 reauthorization of SDFSCA, Congress mandated that ED collect information on efforts to prevent violence in schools nationally. ED initiated the Study on School Violence and Prevention to describe the level of problem behavior, including violence, in schools; to learn about the measures that schools are taking to prevent problem behavior and promote school safety; and to examine the use of funds allocated through SDFSCA.

The Study on School Violence and Prevention was a cooperative effort between the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice (NIJ). At the same time that ED commissioned the Study on School Violence and Prevention, NIJ awarded a grant to conduct the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools. To maximize resources and minimize the burden to schools, the agencies and external researchers agreed to merge many of the study activities. In this report, we refer to the project as the Study on School Violence and Prevention; in NIJ and other publications, the project is called the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools.

Study Questions

The Study on School Violence and Prevention has been guided by several study questions that emphasize issues critical to policy makers and school officials. These issues are the extent and nature of problem behavior in schools; types and quality of prevention efforts underway in schools; planning and funding of prevention efforts; and factors and processes that contribute to school safety. The study questions are as follows.

- What is the incidence of problem behavior in schools nationally?

- What types of efforts are underway in schools to prevent problem behavior?
- How well are efforts to prevent problem behavior implemented?
- To what extent do schools use sound planning processes and information on school prevention options to improve school management
- What sources of funding (including SDFSCA funds) do schools use to support prevention efforts?
- What are the policy-relevant characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools?

Although the Study on School Violence and Prevention did seek to assess the implementation of prevention activities and to identify factors that may contribute to school safety, rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of these activities and factors was beyond its scope.

Overview of Study Design and Report Organization

The Study on School Violence and Prevention is based on three separate data collection and analysis efforts.

- For the "national level" of the study, we conducted secondary analyses of the data collected for the Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence, which was sponsored by the National Center on Education Statistics (Heaviside et al 1998); this survey collected information on school crime and violence prevention efforts from administrators in a probability sample of public elementary and secondary schools.
- The "intermediate level" of the study collected information on school crime and efforts intended to prevent problem behavior from multiple sources (e.g., school district administrators, principals, and program providers) in a probability sample of public and private elementary and secondary schools.
- The "intensive level" of the study drew on detailed quantitative and qualitative information collected from multiple sources in a purposive sample of 40 public secondary schools that participated in the intermediate level.

This report presents what we have learned from the data collected for the intensive level of the study. We will report on the national and intermediate levels of the study separately.

This report is organized around the topics covered by the study questions. The chapters are as follows.

- **Chapter 2** summarizes the methods for the intensive level study.

- **Chapter 3** presents findings on the extent of problem behavior in schools, including the types of victimization experienced by students and teachers, and how students and teachers perceive the safety of their schools. This chapter also describes incident reporting systems.

- **Chapter 4** discusses efforts used by schools to prevent problem behavior and the quality of their implementation. These efforts include formal curricular programs as well as disciplinary practices and policies, and security measures. The chapter also covers the school climate that we observed.

- **Chapter 5** describes how schools and districts plan prevention activities and how they use information (e.g., on effectiveness) in doing so.

- **Chapter 6** presents the results of efforts to compare schools that differ on the extent of problem behavior. These results allow us to consider the characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools.

- **Appendix A** describes the study methods in detail.

Chapter

2

Methods

The intensive level study gathered extensive qualitative and quantitative information from a purposive sample of 40 schools. In this chapter, we briefly describe the methods used in this study. We cover school selection, data collection, and analysis. We also discuss the strengths and limitations of our methods. For a fuller discussion of the study's methodology, please refer to Appendix A.

Intensive Level School Selection

In selecting schools for the intensive level study, we identified schools that differed on school safety, but were similar on background characteristics associated with safety. This approach was designed to permit us to answer the study question on the policy-relevant characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools. We then drew a purposive sample of 40 public secondary schools (20 middle and 20 senior high schools). The criteria for selecting the schools included the following:

- Instructional level – middle schools and senior high schools;
- Number of students enrolled—small and large schools; and
- Metropolitan status—urban, suburban, and rural schools.

Data Collection

We collected qualitative and quantitative information from diverse sources at each of the 40 schools in the intensive level study. The primary vehicle for collecting this information was one round of three-day site visits to each of the schools. Site visitors made systematic observations; reviewed records on incidents of violence; and conducted in-depth interviews with district officials, principals, and school staff. With the assistance of the school coordinator, we also conducted surveys of all teachers and a sample of students.

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The topics covered by this study overlapped with those covered by the intermediate level study. However, the intensive level study went into greater depth and drew from additional sources (e.g., police and school security staff). In addition, other topics that are difficult to capture well in surveys, such as local dynamics (e.g., youth gang activity) that contribute to school violence, were investigated in this intensive level study.

Wherever possible, the data collection drew from extant instruments and design strategies. Survey items have built on an established research base to ensure the study's ability to measure implementation and school climate. Many questions were drawn from studies previously conducted in the areas of school safety and discipline, youth violence, victimization, and drug use.

Analysis

We conducted within-school analyses for the 40 individual schools as well as cross-school analyses. The site visitors conducted within-school analyses as they developed case study reports based primarily on the qualitative information that they collected on site. These reports conformed to a detailed report outline that has tied to the data collection instruments. The analysts combined information across sources to address topics in their reports. As needed, the site visitors or other project staff recontacted respondents to clarify information or to collect additional information. For a detailed discussion of analysis, please refer to Appendix A.

Strengths and Limitations

The intensive level study is the first study in over 20 years to examine in detail what schools are doing to promote school safety. One of the greatest strengths of this study is that it combined quantitative and qualitative information. The quantitative information, mainly the student and teacher survey data, offered strong broad information that represented each school with fairly high precision. The qualitative information complemented the quantitative information by offering details and insights that are typically unavailable with surveys.

Another strength of the study is that it captured a broad range of perspectives and topics linked to the research questions. At a given school, we collected information from over ten different sources. Each source offered a unique lens on complex school safety issues.

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A limitation of the intensive level study is that we are unable to generalize findings from it to other schools. The nonprobability selection of schools and sample sizes underlie this limitation. Another related limitation is that the assignment of schools to cells was imperfect. As mentioned, we based our measures of safety on survey data from a previous component of the study. Student survey data, one of those sources, were based on relatively small sample sizes that limited the precision of the measures. Hence, we found that—using more precise measures based on larger samples of students—some schools were misclassified on safety. Perhaps more importantly, despite our best efforts, a very large percentage of the schools included in the sample did not vary much along measures of disorder. This may be the result of the relatively high non-response rate associated with the intermediate study. The schools that complied with the survey requests tended to be safer, better managed schools. As a result, the site visits, which were based on the intermediate sample, did not include as wide a range of schools along the disorder dimension as would have been ideal for this type of analysis.

A final limitation follows from our approach of having the site visitors conduct the within-school analyses. While we gained strong summary reports that facilitated the cross-site analyses, we lost some of the detail that we potentially could have had in those analyses. In the cross-site analyses, we would have had stronger analyses had we relied on, for example, interview transcripts, rather than summary reports. With many different site visitors, we also introduced some "error" into the within-school analyses that carried over to the cross-site analyses.

Chapter 3

Disorder in Schools

The purpose of this chapter is to address two questions:

- What type of disorder is most prevalent in the sampled schools?
- How do the sampled schools record and monitor disorder occurring in school?

The first question elaborates on analysis reported by the survey data (Gottfredson et al., 2000; Crosse et al., forthcoming). The intent of this chapter is to provide examples and descriptive information on the type of disorder that occurred in the sample schools, as well as providing some insight into how disorder may translate into levels of fear by the students and staff in the school.

Addressing the second question should provide background on the types of systems schools have in place to monitor and evaluate the level of disorder in their schools. Recent initiatives by the U. S. Department of Education have encouraged districts and schools to begin recording and tracking incidents of disorder in a systematic way. This should provide the schools with a useful tool for monitoring potential problems and evaluating any interventions that are targeted to reduce disorder. It should also allow for more systematic collection of this type of data across schools for purposes of state and national reporting.

Methods

This chapter is based on data from three different sources of information. Much of the discussion is based on data collected by the site visitors. This includes interviews with key persons on the staff, as well as direct observations of the functioning of the school. The second source of information is the surveys that were distributed to teachers and students in the school. As noted in Chapter 2, these surveys were identical to those that were used for the national analysis (Gottfredson et al., 2000; Crosse et al., forthcoming) and include items on victimization in school, delinquency and perceptions of safety within the school. The third source is information abstracted by the site visitors from reports prepared by schools on incidents that occurred within the schools.

Overall, the site visitors found that the vast majority of the schools have relatively low levels of serious crime[4]. This was borne out by the surveys of students and teachers. While fighting was common and the presence of weapons was not unheard of, the combination of the two was rarely seen in the same school. Theft was much more common than robbery[5]. While teachers may have been verbally abused by students, they very rarely were attacked or threatened with a weapon. Similarly, data taken from the abstracts documenting crimes reported to the police found only two schools had called the police regarding a fight with a weapon, and no calls were made with regard to two robberies occurring in the schools. In this section, the prevalence of different types of incidents is described, along with site visitor observations in schools.

Characterizing Disorder in Schools

The survey data indicated that 6 percent of students reported they had been threatened with a knife or gun, and less than 1 percent of teachers reported having a weapon pulled on them. Seven percent of students claimed to have been physically robbed, or forced to hand over, items worth more than $1, and 6 percent of students were robbed of items worth less than $1. Three percent of teachers reported that they were physically attacked during the school year, and less than 1 percent were seriously hurt. Seven percent of students admitted hitting or threatening to hit a teacher or other adult at school, and 14 percent of students actually witnessed a teacher being physically attacked by a student at school.

The predominant type of disorder found in the schools involved much less serious incidents. Fighting was found in every school, but infrequently resulted in serious injury, rarely involved weapons, and was unlikely to be identified as gang activity. Regarding drugs and alcohol, personnel in several schools reported having a problem with students smoking, drinking, or getting high in school; and a fair number of students reported easy access to, favorable attitudes toward, and personal use of alcohol and drugs. Perhaps the most widely cited types of disorder in the schools, however, involved student disruptive behavior in the classrooms and insubordination to teachers. Truancy, tardiness, and cutting class also were quite common in the schools. Property damage, such as vandalism and graffiti, occurred in most schools, but was rarely thought to be problematic.

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[4] As used in this chapter, "serious crime" refers to crimes such as aggravated assault, weapons violations, and robbery.

[5] Theft is the unlawful taking of property without violence or threat. Robbery is the unlawful taking of property by violence or threat.

Below, we describe the types of crimes that were found in the schools and the reactions students and staff had when asked about their occurrence.

Fighting. Student altercations occurred to some degree in every school. Based on interviews with staff and students, verified by incident reports, about one-quarter of the schools in our sample (mostly middle schools) had frequent fighting, as much as several times a day; in other schools it occurred less frequently, around once a month or so. Site visitors observed fights at a few schools, as well as the aftermath at one school in which the principal had sustained a broken finger from trying to break up a fight. Fights resulting in serious injuries were rarely reported. Across all schools studied, about one in three fights that the principal found out about were reported to police.

Almost a quarter of students surveyed said that they had to "fight to protect themselves" at school, and 18 percent of students said that someone had threatened them with a beating at school. Fighting was the highest reported type of delinquent behavior in the surveys, with 38 percent of students admitting that they "hit or threatened to hit other students" in the last 12 months.

As previously mentioned, fights rarely involved the use of weapons. This is not to say that weapons were absent from schools. Possession of a weapon, mostly knives, was cited by several school administrators to have occurred at least once in the past year or so. Hunting knives were popular in rural schools. These schools tended to have rules that permitted the possession of a knife shorter than one inch long. Only the school personnel in a few urban areas seemed concerned about weapons. In one of these schools, razor knives and mace were common, and in the other school, weapons were confiscated about six times a year. As students at one school described, knives usually were brought to school for protection, although a few brought them to show off. Less than 10 percent of students surveyed reported carrying a "hidden weapon other than a pocket knife." (We were unable to discern the extent to which these weapons included guns.) The site visits indicated, however, that if weapons were present in the schools, they were rarely used to harm or threaten another person.

Fights in our sample of schools were unlikely to be caused by gang activity. Although personnel and students from several schools admitted the presence of "gang-wannabes," site visitors rarely saw any evidence of gang activity in the schools. Some findings pointed to gang dealings outside of school. Administrators from one urban school claimed to have five different gangs that caused trouble off campus. Ten percent of the students surveyed reported having been involved in gang fights, and 7 percent of students reported belonging to a gang that engaged in "fighting, stealing, or selling drugs."

Similarly, interviews with school personnel and students rarely mentioned racial tension, especially as a motivator to fight. This is note worthy because almost half (16) of the schools in our sample had more than 25 percent of its students in a race/ethnic group (or groups) other than the majority race/ethnic group at the school. Only one school principal claimed that students fought due to differences among identifiable groups, which were mainly attributed to socioeconomic levels and where the students lived.

Fighting was explained to most likely be the result of "petty" issues or gossip directly related to alleged activities of individuals, friendship groups, or cliques. Several school officials noted the rise of fighting among girls. As the Assistant Principal at one school described, fights often were brought upon because "she looked at me the wrong way" or "she was after my boyfriend." Students felt that fighting was prevalent at one mid-size, rural middle school, because some students came to school in the mornings angry and ready to fight; these students would fight students of other cliques (defined by race, family, socioeconomic level, and the place where they lived). One of the site visitors reported that, "There was a general attitude among the students that they had to fight to establish themselves, and that their parents encouraged that as a way of resolving conflicts. Students come from homes where fighting is a normative way of solving problems, and they therefore feel it should be okay in school."

Theft. Theft showed up in nearly half the schools that provided incident records, but was reported to be a problem in only a quarter of the schools. (Again, theft refers to unlawful taking of property without violence or threat.) Administrators who talked about this type of incident reported that most of the problems were minor theft, consisting of student possessions being taken from unlocked lockers or gym locker rooms. From the student surveys, 44 percent of students said that someone had stolen something worth less than $1, while 42 percent of the students said that things were stolen that were worth $1 or more. Teachers, too, reported being victims of theft, although in fewer numbers than the students who reported being victimized in this way. Twenty-one percent of teachers had personal property worth more than $10 stolen from them, while 11 percent had more valuable items stolen.

Classroom Disruptions. All but a few schools in our study had data that supported some type of student disruptive behavior as a prevalent type of disorder in the school. Mostly, the disruptive behavior took place in the classroom and included such things as students talking, being loud or unruly, calling names, using profanity, engaging in roughhousing or "horseplay," not remaining seated, refusing to follow directions, throwing things, or chewing gum. Similar types of disruptive behavior frequently were reported on the busses, too. Dress code violations were mentioned at a fair number of schools. Some schools were more serious about this rule than others.

More than three-fourths of the teachers surveyed said that they spent at least some time each day coping with disruptive student behavior, and 28 percent of teachers claimed that the disruptive behavior kept them from teaching a "great deal" or a "fair amount" of the time. Overall, however, teachers reported that they maintained a fair amount of classroom order. Generally, students paid attention in class, did not take things that didn't belong to them, and seldom damaged property. From the survey, almost all teachers (96%) stated that students "almost always" or "often" did what the teachers asked. The main problem teachers faced was with students talking at inappropriate times. Almost half the teachers noted that this occurred "sometimes," and 32 percent said that it happened "often." While students seldom tried to physically hurt, make threat to, or curse at others, 73 percent of teachers reported that students did tease one another. A majority of teachers reported that students were distracted by the misbehavior of others, but classroom activity rarely came to a stop because of discipline problems.

Insubordination to Teachers. Another common type of disruptive student behavior involved insubordination. This involves students showing blatant disrespect for a teacher's authority. Every school in our sample had reported incidents of this type, and many of the staff who were interviewed cited this as a prevalent problem in their schools. The severity of this type of incident varied among schools. In some of the more serious examples, students yelled at teachers, swore at them, and even harassed or threatened them. Many teachers and administrators suggested that students were becoming more disrespectful throughout the years and refusing to listen or remain under control. "Sassiness" was a term commonly used to describe the students' behavior. One principal thought that, "Students are getting more rude each year," and believed that it was because, in part, "there's less parental backing each year."

Harassment, including sexual harassment or threatening behavior, against students and sometimes teachers, was reported in a few of the schools' incident reports. Nearly 30 percent of students surveyed reported seeing a teacher threatened by a student. Very few teachers reported being physically attacked, but a fair number of teachers were threatened (18%) or received obscene remarks or gestures (39%) from a student.

Truancy. Next to classroom disruptions and disrespect for authority, truancy-related incidents were another prevalent type of disorder, as found in nearly half the schools. These incidents included, in addition to being truant from school, skipping class or coming late to class. In some cases, students would leave school or walk out of a class without permission. At one specific school, tardy incidents were estimated to represent 85 percent of all the problems at the school. In addition, some school personnel also complained that a majority of students failed to report to detention. Many schools had specific policies to deal with attendance and tardy violations.

Property Crimes. Property damage such as vandalism or graffiti did occur at the schools, as well, but was rarely mentioned as a prevalent type of disorder. Although site visitors observed property damage, it was not reported as a problem to the site visitors. Similarly, about 1 in 5 students admitted to destroying either school property (17%) or personal property not belonging to them (20%) in the last 12 months.

Tobacco, Alcohol, and Other Drugs. School administrators, teachers, and students from several schools reported that tobacco was a major problem in their schools. Site visitors confirmed these reports by personal observations of some students smoking outside, as well as evidence from cigarette butts on school grounds and ashes in the bathrooms.

Other drugs and/or alcohol were reported to be a prevalent problem in about one-fourth of the schools. When specified, the drug of choice most often was marijuana. At one school, site visitors observed a group of students smoking marijuana outside the school. At a few other schools, visitors witnessed or heard about numerous violations involving alcohol in school. In most of these schools with reported drug problems, however, site visitors did not witness any such disorder. The schools with drug and alcohol problems could not easily be distinguished from schools without these problems. In fact, at one school where administrators reported about 30 percent of its student population using or selling drugs (including within and outside of school), site visitors observed low levels of student disorder and only a few recorded incidents of drug violations.

From the student surveys, we learned that drugs and alcohol were available to students. The majority of students claimed that obtaining certain substances was "easy" or "very easy": cigarettes (68%), alcohol (62%), and marijuana (51%). Regarding "other drugs," 43 percent of students reported easy access to these. We are unable to discern, however, whether students thought that they could get these drugs within or outside the school.

Most students reportedly kept most of their drug and alcohol activity outside of the school. Only 15 percent of the students admitted to going to school when they were drunk or high on some drugs. This supports observations by site visitors and personal accounts by staff and students that showed minimal disorder due to drug and alcohol activity in the schools.

Site Visitor Descriptions

The discussion above provides a picture of the types of incidents that occurred in the schools. Site visitors also conducted observations at the schools by walking the halls both during classes and in between class changes. They also went into bathrooms, walked around the school campus, monitored student traffic as the school day started and ended, observed lunch periods, and looked into classrooms. The visitors were instructed to note any disorder among the students, such as rowdiness and high noise level, amount of loitering in the halls during classes, and other signs of misconduct such as smoking or fighting.

In roughly one-third of the schools, site visitors noted some student disorder. They observed "stragglers" in the hallways during classes, running and pushing in the hallways and near busses, and/or noisy cafeterias or classrooms. As previously noted, some site visitors observed students smoking outside (in one case they were smoking marijuana), and a few fights also were witnessed. In one particular school with a lot of student disorder, one site visitor observed, "While bedlam may be an exaggeration, children do run and yell between classes. This level of noise and motion increased dramatically during lunch and after school. The school gym, cafeteria and bus lines were chaotic, even when adults were present."

In about the same number of schools, however, site visitors observed very low levels of student disorder. They reported students moving about at a leisurely, orderly pace, with low levels of noise and no loitering in the halls. Students in these schools appeared to be on task in the classrooms. As one site visitor observed, "Overall, we found the students polite, friendly, and orderly. No shoving or rough-housing was witnessed during the site visit." A site visitor from a different school reported, "The students, observed during class changes and while boarding the buses at the end of school, were extremely orderly and noticeably polite to each other and to the adults monitoring the area."

Disorder was most likely to occur in areas without a lot of supervision or monitoring, such as bathrooms or areas outside the school. Lunch periods and other times when large numbers of students congregate without adequate adult supervision also were cited as places where disruption was more likely to occur. Several school administrators mentioned that students waited until after school to cause trouble. Bathrooms were most commonly cited as places for student disorder in the school, mainly due to smoking, along with a few examples of fights and vandalism. In the student surveys, bathrooms were the most common places in the school that students reported staying away from, cited by almost 15 percent of the students. Fifteen percent of teachers also reported that student bathrooms were not safe from vandalism, personal attacks (on students, teachers, and others), and theft. Isolated areas outside the school also were commonly used for fighting or smoking, and represented the next highest percentage of student response from the surveys (14%) regarding places they stay away from. Gym locker rooms without adult supervision provided opportunities for theft, and 13 percent of teachers thought that these areas were unsafe (for teachers, students, and others). Students skipped school from unsupervised student parking lots and vandalized cars.

During lunch periods, large numbers of students were confined to one place with few adult monitors. This was a common time of the day for student disorder, particularly in regard to high noise level and rowdiness. According to site visitors at one school, "Lunch is very loud with lots of movement from table to table and from the cafeteria to the gym where lunch-goers play basketball and run around. Even though adults are present, no attempt was made to keep the noise level down. The kids were so loud we didn't hear the bell—a teacher had to come outside to tell the students to come in." Interviews with students and staff from other schools as well, showed that fighting was most likely to occur during lunchtime.

Similarly, areas of bus arrivals and departures were potential sites for disorder. Site visitors at one school described the scene as "pandemonium," citing examples of one student slapping someone and another student throwing pencils. Personnel from a few schools cited the majority of their student disorder occurring on the buses themselves. Again, these are areas with a lot of students and little adult supervision.

Perceptions of Safety and Disorder

Fear of disorder interferes with the learning process. Even though the schools visited were predominantly free of serious violence, less serious incidents occurred that could contribute to apprehension about being in school, although on the whole, site visitors did not find this to be the case at the schools that they studied. At roughly two-thirds of the schools, site visitors unanimously described their schools as safe or very safe, with low or very low levels of disorder. Similarly, about a third of the site visitors reported that the schools they visited were completely orderly and safe. Only one site visiting team characterized their school as "unsafe".

From the student surveys, most students reported feeling safe at school and in the surrounding community. Almost 57 percent of students reported feeling "almost always" safe while in the school building. Similarly, 64 percent of students were "almost never" afraid that someone would hurt or bother them at school, and 72 percent were "almost never" afraid on the way to or from school. However, as many as 12 percent of students reported avoiding certain places (e.g., restrooms) because of fear. As reported earlier in this section, however, about a quarter of students felt they had to fight to protect themselves at school. A fair number of students also witnessed delinquent acts against teachers at school, including teachers being threatened by students (30%) and being attacked by students (14%).

Thirteen percent of students reported "almost never" feeling safe. Those students that did report feeling unsafe at times were wary in school bathrooms, locker rooms, and isolated areas in and around the school. According to site visitors at one school, "students themselves feel the school isn't safe. Besides worrying about an outside gunman breaching school security, a few focus group participants related that they've felt unsafe in the schools' hallways, bathrooms, and classrooms where teachers have stepped away. Their apprehension appears to center on potential physical (pushing and shoving, being attacked) or emotional (name-calling, threats to fight) incidents. The kids also said they don't feel safe in the hallways or bathrooms, where they themselves or friends have been pushed, shoved, or otherwise attacked."

Teachers had a slightly more mixed set of feelings about safety in the school. From the survey data, the majority (61%) of teachers felt very safe in their classrooms while teaching. However, less than half the teachers felt very safe in any other part of the school or grounds. Only about a quarter of teachers felt very safe in the restrooms used by students (25%) or in locker rooms or gyms (23%). According to one site visitor, "Most of the teachers think the school is safe, stating that the threat of violence isn't their primary challenge, rather keeping order in the classroom is their biggest problem. One teacher did state that she felt physically threatened and has made a point to stay out of the hallways at lunch and during class changes, and does not stay after school at all. In her words, "I do my job and then I get out." One teacher at another school commented that she had felt threatened because the doors were unlocked and anyone from the community could come in at any time. Finally, site visitors from another school mentioned that "teachers were also divided on whether they thought the school was safe or not (although even those who complained said it was not bad in their own classrooms)."

Incident Reporting and Monitoring in Schools

An important aspect of managing disorder in school is the development of systems to monitor incidents. The discussion in this section provides a description of the types of monitoring systems the schools in the sample currently have in place and how these systems compare with the standards proposed by the state and federal government.

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Incident Records

While most schools follow similar discipline procedures (See Chapter 4), they varied quite a bit in how they recorded and used incident data. A review of the systems that are in place in the schools included in the site visits found that: (a) collection forms vary widely between schools; (b) serious incidents usually are reported to the district/state; (c) victims and offenders are rarely identified by name in the system; and (d) most schools review incident data informally rather than systematically.

Collection Forms. Each school used its own standard referral form, developed locally either at the school or at the district level. These forms were used when students were referred to the central office for misbehavior. Most forms included a checklist of possible incidents and actions with additional space for describing them in detail. For example, checklists of incidents could include excessive talking, fighting, leaving class without permission, tardiness, use of profanity, substance abuse, failure to follow directions, and being unprepared for class. Actions might include in-school suspension, detention, out-of-school suspension, referral to a counselor, or conference with a parent. Actions that the teacher took before sending the student to the discipline office might include parent contact, meeting with the student, verbal warning, or revised seating arrangement.

Several school administrators mentioned that they prefer to document each incident in detail, describing what happened and what steps were taken with the student, including "previous action" by the teacher. A few school principals mentioned that this documentation is related to the possibility that legal action might become necessary. For example, one principal said that he insists that the teachers describe the problem behavior in great detail, so that the incident reports "can be taken to court." Another principal mentioned that he maintains very detailed written documentation of disciplinary action because of "potential legal action."

Besides noting the incident and action, other items commonly found in schools' incident reporting forms included:

- Offender's name,
- Referring name (usually a teacher),
- Student's grade, and
- Date of incident.

Other items that were found in only a few schools were:

- Student's race;
- Student's gender;

- Time of the incident;
- Location of the incident;
- Names of other students involved, such as accomplices or witnesses;
- Previous action taken (a record of how the student was disciplined before being sent to the office);
- Parents notified; and
- Student comments.

Reporting Incidents to the District. Most school administrators mentioned reporting only serious incidents to their districts. These data usually involved suspensions, and could be either in summary form or as a listing of all serious referrals. At several schools, serious incidents were kept track of separately from other referrals. However, in a lot of these schools, serious incidents were so rare that they readily stood out in administrators' minds. As one school principal pointed out, "more serious incidents may not be recorded as these are vivid and rare and can easily by tracked by memory."

Similarly, serious infractions leading to expulsions were routinely made known to the districts. Most of these cases required district approval. Likewise, school district personnel were usually involved in alternative placement decisions, which kept them aware of serious incidents or repeat offenders. Regardless of how the district personnel received their information, school districts usually were aware of how many suspensions and expulsions occurred at each of their schools, and the reasons why these actions were taken.

Reporting Incidents to the Police. School administrators also mentioned reporting serious incidents to the local police. In some schools, only criminal offenses were reported, which usually involved the local police department anyway. In other schools, any serious offense was reported, such as theft, drug and alcohol offenses, and serious fights. One school principal pointed out that, by law, he must report all incidents involving weapons or drugs. In some schools, summary reports were provided to the officers who work with the schools. In another school, copies of its standard incident forms were sent to the School Resource Officer, who must then decide whether or not the incident warrants reporting to the police department.

Reporting Incidents to the State. Some school administrators also mentioned sending discipline information directly to their states. In one school, information was sent from its bus and teacher referrals to the central office and, at the end of the year, to the state. In another school, a Discipline Incident Summary on violent behaviors was sent to both the state and district, and at a third school, a State School Behavior Report on suspensions and expulsions was sent to the district office and reported to the state.

Other schools had incident data entered directly into statewide computer systems. For example, in one state, school personnel used a statewide information system that contains "a wealth of information on each student, including name, address, social security number, parent's information, emergency information, immunization record, academic information, and discipline records (type and date of incident and action taken)." Data from these records could be aggregated to the school, county, regional, and state levels. At another school, a computerized reporting system was used that sought to have all schools in the state networked with the state education agency (SEA); this would allow the SEA to obtain, at any time, discipline information for any school system in the state.

From most schools, how incident data got to the state level was unclear. States are required, however, to collect data from their local education agencies (usually districts) regarding incidents in schools. These data must be submitted to Congress as part of performance reports for the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act. For the "State Education Agency Safe and Drug-Free Program Reporting," states currently use a reporting form that asks, among other things, about the "frequency, seriousness, and incidence of violence in elementary and secondary schools."

Specifically, states are asked to report the number of:

- Incidents,
- Victims (students, school personnel, non-school personnel),
- Offenders (students, non-students), and
- Weapon-related incidents.

Also, as part of the Gun-Free Schools Act, states are asked to also report the number of:

- Student expulsions for bringing a firearm to school (handgun, rifles/shotguns, other firearms),
- Student expulsions shortened to less than one year on a case-by-case basis, and
- Expelled students referred to an alternative placement.

School officials generally report serious incidents to states, either directly or through their districts. This reporting procedure, however, is not standard across all schools and some are more efficient than others. Some schools utilized standard, computerized reporting methods, while others relied on hard copies or memory. Because of this variability, information is likely to be inaccurate.

School officials rarely do anything with the information they collect on the victim and/or offender, if such information is collected at all. Often, names of students involved in the incident were recorded on the referral forms. The incident was recorded in the offending student's file. If need be, school administrators, especially those who track incident data electronically, could retrieve summary data on offenders. Victims, however, may be noted by hand on referral forms, but were rarely entered into computer systems, and even more rarely summarized into a report.

U.S. Department of Education Incident Collection and Reporting Recommendations. In order to extract this information easily from the schools, states have asked for recommendations from a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) forum for the best ways to collect and report incident data. Findings from the NCES task force, which included SEA officials, were published and disseminated to SEAs in July 1996. SEAs are responsible for distributing these recommendations to the district and school levels. Although a few schools had incident reporting forms developed by their districts (which could have adopted these recommendations), none of the schools that we visited mentioned anything about specific reporting recommendations from either their districts or states.

The main finding from the NCES task force was the advice to track incident data through a **unit record system**. This would avoid duplication while making sure that all the data was collected. Specifically, school administrators should document incidents using:

- One incident record per incident,
- One or more student record(s) for every student involved, and
- Link the incident and student records by a unique identifier.

For example, if a fight occurred between two students, an incident record would be made to document the "fight," and two student records would be made for the two students involved. All three records (one incident and two students) would be linked by a unique identifier. Thus, when the state asks for the number of incidents, school officials would retrieve all incident records, sorted by the unique identifiers. When asked for the number of offenders or victims, school officials would retrieve all student records. Since students would be linked to specific incidents through the unique identifiers, questions about how many students were involved in fights, for example, could be answered.

Currently, school administrators appear to document an incident on a single form. From the example above, it would be noted on one referral form what happened (fight) and who was involved (names of students). If this information were entered into a computer database, it usually would be tracked by incident or student. Thus, with computer tracking systems, data could be retrieved involving one incident record per incident, and one or more student records for offending students. We did not observe, however, that these records were linked by unique identifiers. While obtaining total numbers of incidents and students involved per type of incident would be possible, these data would not be linked. A single fight, for example, that occurred between two students may be listed under each student's record. The NCES task force recommended other key concepts for schools' reporting of incidents:

- Data collection should be organized around the school year (as opposed to the calendar year or fiscal year);
- All incidents should be reported that occurred on school grounds or school transportation, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day;
- The location of the incident should be included (if it happened during an off-campus, school-sponsored activity, it only should be reported if a student was involved);
- Students should be identified by only those enrolled in the district (a "non-student" would include a student from another district);
- Incident reports should include whether or not alcohol, drugs, or weapons were involved;
- Incident reports should include whether or not the incident was gang- or hate-related;
- Records should be kept on which incidents were reported to police; and
- If more than one offense occurred at the same time, only the most serious one should be recorded on the single incident form.

The schools visited for this study had reporting systems that were consistent with many of these recommendations. School officials created records based on the school year, and some reported the location of the incidents. There appeared to be some confusion, however, about whether or not to report something, especially if it happened outside the school walls or school day. This confusion extended to after-school and off-campus activities. Referrals usually noted whether alcohol, drugs, or weapons were involved, but did not always document whether police were called. None of the incident referral forms had a way of systematically recording whether or not the incident was gang- or hate-related, although this certainly could have been noted in the description of the incident. Finally, there were some inconsistencies among the schools in how incidents were reported if more than one occurred at the same time. In some schools, more than one incident was listed on the same student record.

No one from the site visit schools or districts mentioned anything about the state reporting forms or NCES reporting recommendations. Currently, states would appear to have a difficult time collecting all of the information that the NCES task force recommended.

Monitoring and Reviewing Incident Data

Disciplinary information from each school in our study usually was reviewed informally within the school. Principals and teachers usually were aware of the most prevalent types of disorder at their schools as well as which students were more likely to cause trouble.

In many schools, incident data were sorted by student. This provided an easy way to review which students were involved in different kinds of trouble. For example, teachers at one school looked at the referrals to see if any students were repeat offenders in order to decide the most appropriate punishment. Other school officials looked at a student's history of misbehaving before deciding whether or not to send the student to an alternative school. As one school administrator said, "reports are filed alphabetically in each student's file. The information accumulates until the principal or Dean of students feels that a student has engaged in too many misconduct behaviors. A more lasting solution is developed, such as sending the student to the local alternative high school."

Another reason that staff reviewed incident data was to monitor classroom management. Some teachers issued more referrals than others did, or different types of referrals, both of which could warrant attention from administrators. For example, at one school, the principal reviewed its incident information for internal tracking and as a way to audit teachers and students with large referrals.

Besides looking at individual students or teachers, incident data was reviewed within the schools in order to notice trends. This kind of tracking, however, was more the exception than the rule. It was mostly done informally by teachers and administrators in the school. A few school officials mentioned that their districts compiled and provided trend data, or summary reports, to the school. By looking at trends in disorder, administrators could decide whether or not to create new or revise existing programs, rules or policies. For example, the principal at one school noticed an increase in student drug use. Based on this information, she considered bringing in a drug-sniffing dog to conduct random searches. A site visitor at another school reported that, "though no formal needs assessments are made, the administration examines the disciplinary reports to see if there are trends with particular students, offenses, or teachers. They then adjust procedures accordingly."

Only a few schools in our study had specific procedures in place to review incident data. At one school, the faculty senate consistently reviewed data by examining a printout listing all incidents at the end of the school year. Another school's principal participated in a systematic review with his district by being involved in a district safety committee. The committee met monthly to review all accidents and incidents involving students and employees. They also reviewed reports of vandalism and destruction to school and district property and conducted walks through the school buildings to make sure everything appeared safe (e.g., no torn carpet, fire extinguishers charged, fire alarms and locks in working order). The committee would then formulate a plan based on any problems found and distribute a report to all schools regarding the nature of the problem and how it was being handled. In another district, two staff members in the central office coordinated and provided assistance to school staff on collecting data on safety issues. They tracked incident reports and attendance, as well as health issues and community involvement.

Chapter

4

Efforts to Prevent Problem Behavior

This chapter addresses two questions:

What types of efforts are underway in schools to prevent problem behavior?

How well are efforts to prevent problem behavior implemented?

Two previous reports for this project (Gottfredson et al., 2000; Crosse et al., forthcoming) addressed each of these questions using information collected from a representative sample of schools, teachers, students and program providers. The goal of the present chapter is to get a better understanding of these results by providing a qualitative picture of what schools are doing to prevent problem behavior.

This chapter is organized into 4 sections, including: (a) violence prevention activities; (b) school security; (c) school discipline practices and policies, and (d) school climate.

Violence Prevention Activities

The previous report analyzed violence prevention activities that were classified into 19 different types. These are divided into two overall groups: prevention activities (Table 4-1) and school-wide arrangements (Table 4-2). In this section, we amplify the results from the previous report for all of these activities except security and surveillance, which we discuss separately in the school security section of this report.

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Table 4-1

Prevention Activity Categories and Definitions

Categories of School Activities	Definition
1) Prevention curriculum, instruction or training	Training or instruction in which the content involves knowledge, skills, attitudes or values intended to prevent problem behavior. Instruction or training may be brief (less than an hour) or of extended duration.
2) Counseling/social work/psychological/ therapeutic interventions	Provision of advice or guidance to remedy or prevent problems using identifiable techniques of psychology, counseling, or social work.
3) Use of external personnel resources in classrooms	Includes the use of parent or community volunteers, authority figures (e.g., police officers), classroom consultants, aides, or older students.
4) Culture or climate change, norm change	Includes efforts to establish, encourage, or sustain a special school climate or culture though symbols, ceremonies, or systematic procedures; communication of expectations; and use of social influence or attitude change techniques to obtain commitment to norms.
5) Behavioral or behavior modification interventions	Tracking student behavior, setting behavior goals, and feedback or punishment to decrease undesired behavior or rewards to increase desired behavior.
6) Recreational, enrichment, and leisure activities	Provision of or access to activities, play, amusement, or diversions; exploration outside the school; for fun or relaxation.
7) Improvements to classroom organization and management	Activities applied to entire classes to establish and enforce classroom rules, use rewards and punishments, improve the use or management of time, or change the way in which students are grouped for instruction by ability, achievement or effort within the classroom.

Table 4-1 (continued)

Categories of School Activities	Definition
8) Services to families	Outreach or service to families to improve their child management and supervision practices, or to provide other family services.
9) Mentoring, tutoring, coaching, or apprenticeships	Provision of one-on-one attention to students other than counseling or behavioral programming.
10) Improvements to instructional practices	Activities applied to entire classes that involve the adoption or expansion of improved instructional techniques or practices. Includes training, supervision or assistance to improve instructional methods. Not included are curriculum changes.
11) Intergroup relations, interaction between school and community	Activities to promote interaction among members of diverse groups and celebrate diversity, to promote relations between the school and the community, and improve intergroup relations or resolve or reduce conflict.
12) Youth regulating and responding to student conduct	Student participation in making school rules, in resolving disputes, or in responding to problem behavior (e.g., student court, peer mediation, or student conflict resolution).
13) Planning structure or process	Structured or facilitated planning activities as well as activity to coordinate or manage change in the school. Includes the use of methods or processes for planning or program development, inclusion of a broad range of individuals or perspectives in planning, or the use of consultants to advise on school practices or solve problems.
14) Security and surveillance	Application of procedures to discourage intruders from entering the school; watching entrances, hallways and school grounds; facilitating reporting of problem behavior; searching for weapons or drugs; removing barriers to observation or inspection; action to avert potential unsafe events.

Table 4-2

School Wide Arrangements and Definitions

School Wide Arrangements	Definitions
1) Simple provision of information regarding the harmfulness of violence, drug use, or risky sexual behavior or about the availability of services	Information may be provided by using posters, newsletters, brochures, announcements, handouts, videos, slide shows, lectures, presentations, readings, or other methods. Information may be directed at students, parents, educators or community members. Does not include instruction or training. Does not include information conveyed as part of any activity listed above.
2) Reorganization of grades, classes or school schedules	Includes use of specially arranged school schedules, group of students, formation of within-school units, or small class size to prevent problem behavior or promote school order. May also include within-school units such as "teams" or "houses" or special grade-to-grade promotion criteria.
3) Activities that influence the composition of the school's population	Includes are special student recruitment efforts, school specialization in attractive educational programs, selective admissions criteria, scholarships, assignment of students with educational or behavior problems to other schools, or a requirement of tuition or fees.
4) Treatment or prevention interventions for administration, faculty, or staff	Includes prevention or treatment of alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use; anger or self-control problems, or other health or mental health problems.
5) Architectural design or structural features of the school	Includes the use of fences, space, facilities, barricades, physical arrangements, or artwork.

The previous analysis found that the diversity and quantity of activities reported by principals was extremely high. For example, on average, principals reported 9 of the 14 different prevention activity types listed in Table 4-1 (Gottfredson et al., 2000). The most commonly reported prevention activity type was prevention curriculum, instruction or training. Nationally, 76 percent of schools reported using this category. A substantial proportion of schools used "celebrity" programs, which are "off-the-shelf" or "canned" programs marketed to schools. A large percentage of schools also reported school-wide arrangements, with the most common activity being simple provision of information (80% of schools).

As part of the site visit, principals and other school personnel were asked about activities they considered important for preventing or reducing problem behavior in schools. The number of separate prevention activities reported by respondents to site visitors was less than would be expected from the national survey data. On average, 12 prevention activities per school were reported to site visitors. This compares to an average of 17 to 18 activities reported for schools nationally during the survey.

At least some of the difference between the two results stems from the methods used to collect the information. To some extent, the difference also may be due to the site selection methods used--probability sampling versus purposive selection. During the survey, the principal was presented with a list of possible activities that could be used to prevent problem behavior. He/she was then asked to report on appropriate activity under each category. This contrasts to the procedures used during the site visit, which consisted of an in-person, open-ended interview, without specific prompts or cues about particular types of activities. The open-ended questions are most likely to elicit information that is prominent in the principal's mind, especially as it ties into preventing violence within the school. The survey provided a more exhaustive set of cues to the respondent to assist in defining eligible activities. However, it may have also placed greater demand on the respondent to report any possible activity that might qualify as an activity to prevent violence. This suggests that respondents may have over-reported activities on the survey.

The survey of program providers found that the quality of implementation of prevention activities was quite low. For each particular type of activity, the provider survey asked about specific practices with respect to the particular activity. The responses were then used to assess the extent that providers were following "best practices[6]." Overall, this analysis found that only 57 percent of the prevention activities achieved adequate levels of implementation quality. That is, only 57 percent of the measures met criteria (developed by experts) for sufficient strength to achieve a reduction in problem behavior or an increase in school safety.

Interestingly, adequacy ratings on the national survey varied by school level and location. The ratings tended to be highest in urban areas and lowest in rural areas. This is opposite to what one might expect, given that the national survey results indicate that urban areas tended to have lower levels of safety than suburban or rural areas. Based on those results, one might expect that schools that are the least safe would be the least able to implement programs in an effective way. Instead, the survey data suggest that program implementation is driven in part by the need to control problem behavior: schools that have greater safety concerns appear to attend more to the quality of program implementation than other schools.

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[6] Best practices were based on expert judgement and a review of the literature on the effectiveness of prevention activities (see Gottfredson et al., 2000).

The site visit reports amplify this general pattern. As noted in the previous chapter, many of the schools visited were considered by staff and students to have relatively low levels of violence. This was also reflected in the interviews with many of the principals during the site visits. Principals did not report an overwhelming number of concerns with safety and, on the whole, did not attribute the safety of the school to particular types of prevention activities.

The site visits were not designed to do an intensive process evaluation of particular activities in the school, so we have very little information on the content of the program (e.g., material covered in lesson plans; type of counseling strategies used) or the methods of implementing the activities. Nonetheless, we found great variability across the different types of programs with respect to basic quality criteria, including the existence of specific goals, the actual frequency of participation of students in the activity and any tracking of outcomes relative to the initial goals of the activity. With a number of exceptions, the site visitors generally found a lack of information on these basic elements. One interpretation of this is that many of the schools that did not perceive themselves as having a safety problem also did not seem to feel a great need to ensure that the program was being implemented as initially planned.

To illustrate the issues that came up during the site visits, we discuss four different types of programs: (a) youth regulation of and response to student conduct; (b) activities involving individual attention (such as mentoring, tutoring, or coaching.); (c) activities to change or maintain the culture or climate of the school, alter or maintain expectations for student behavior, or secure commitment to norms; and (d) implementation of counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic activity. These program types were selected on the basis of having a sufficiently large number of schools in the site visit sample reporting them, as well as having the site visitor actually interview the provider for the activity.

Youth Regulation of and Response to Student Conduct

About half the visited schools had instituted some form of prevention activity that involved students in managing or responding to the conduct of their peers. The vast majority of such activities were peer mediation programs. In 12 of these schools, the site visitor interviewed the program coordinators. The discussion below provides information on the peer mediation programs in these 12 schools. The schools included in this group of 12 were evenly distributed across middle and high schools, along urbanicity and size.

Participation in the program was voluntary in all cases but one. In that program, students were often given the choice between referral to the discipline office/suspension and participation in peer mediation. Typically, students who wanted the services of a mediator completed a request form located in a counselor's office or in boxes placed in common areas throughout the school. Mediation sessions were held at a mutually agreed upon time during the school day. Students generally were excused from a class period to participate in a mediation session. Mediations adhered to a set of rules agreed upon in advance. If successful, mediation ended with some sort of written agreement between the disputants.

All programs targeted the entire school population. For the most part, student mediators were drawn from the upper grade or grades of a school. The number of mediators per school ranged from 10 to 46. The number of mediators was not related to the size of the school, except perhaps inversely. Two of the largest schools had the smallest numbers of mediators.

In most schools, programs were coordinated by one adult staff member. No school had more than two staff members involved in running the program. The type of staff varied by school (e.g., counselor, teacher, security aide), and a minority of staff were actually compensated for running the program by means of a stipends.

All mediators received training, generally a few days outside school. Training usually involved practice and role playing. Mediations were quite structured and closely followed the model conveyed during training. One program provided mediators with ongoing training and other activities throughout the year. Funding for the program was provided by the school district in all but two cases. Most of the districts used SDFSCA funds for this type of program.

Overall, peer mediation programs in these schools were not particularly well implemented. Programs were not widely used by students (as far as site visitors could tell), had scanty monitoring and evaluation data and were not perceived as being very effective by students or staff.

On the whole, these programs were not widely supported by the schools. Extreme examples of this are in two schools where the programs were not implemented at all. One never really started because of a lack of interest on the part of the student body and the other had operated in previous years but was not operating in 1998-99 because it did not have a faculty or staff sponsor. Similarly, only two schools provided an extra stipend for staff to assist with the activities. In the other schools the staff running the program picked the activity up as part of their normal duties. In one school, space was a clear issue. The principal had not allocated a private space for the program, which made conducting confidential sessions difficult.

In most schools, the program was perceived as not well used or not well known. Programs maintained very limited data on the extent of use by students. Only five schools provided any numbers related to how many students used the program during the course of the school year. These consisted of numbers of mediations per year or per week rather than numbers of students. Three of the five schools provided actual counts of mediations, the others provided estimates. The range was 30 to 100 mediations per year. In the schools that provided actual counts, roughly 7, 9, and 22 percent of the student body participated in peer mediation during the past year.

Programs also maintained very limited data for program monitoring and evaluation. To the extent that programs maintained any data at all, it was primarily process data—records of individual mediations and their resolutions. Two programs made a practice of following up with participants after mediations. One school sought regular feedback from students and parents about the program.

In the absence of evaluation data, indications of program effectiveness were anecdotal. Perceptions of effectiveness varied. Program coordinators and mediators tended to be the most positive about program potential and about the skills they had acquired. Other school staff and administrators had mixed reactions. They often felt that the program had limited uses or was not well implemented. Students tended to have the most negative perceptions. At one school, although student mediators were quite enthusiastic about their mediation program, other students questioned its effectiveness for example, these non-mediators reported that, rather than resolving differences, medication had the effect of moving unresolved disputes from school to other venues such as local restaurant parking lots.

Activities Involving Individual Attention

About one quarter of the visited schools had programs in place that focused on providing individual academic and social support to a subgroup of students. These included tutoring and mentoring programs, dropout prevention programs, career orientation programs, and family literacy programs. These did not include activities that provided one-on-one attention as a function of counseling or psychological support. Interviews with program providers were obtained for 8 of the programs in 7 of these schools.

The programs were fairly evenly distributed between middle and high schools, large and small schools, and rural and urban schools. The programs were quite diverse but all provided extra academic or social support to students and all targeted at-risk students. Teachers and other school staff identified and referred students to such programs usually because of their grades, problem behavior, attendance, or combination of these problems.

Goals of the programs tended to focus on individual students. They were phrased in terms of improving participants' grades, social skills, attendance, and self esteem. One school had the stated goal of reducing the overall dropout rate. One program aimed for an "80 percent positive placement rate" (i.e., remaining in school, finding full-time employment, or entering post-secondary education).

Providers usually worked with students in pullout settings during the school day, generally no longer than a class period 2 or 3 times per week. One program (a dropout prevention program) functioned as a class for participating students that met every day. Two programs met once a week after school for 1 to 2 hours. Most programs had between 15 and 40 participants.

Quality of implementation is difficult to assess because of the lack of data maintained by the programs. The programs varied tremendously along a number of important dimensions correlated with implementation quality. Staffing ranged from a full-time coordinator with a staff of 9 teachers to a teacher or counselor coordinating the program in his or her spare time. Support ranged from two programs that did not receive any cash funding to several programs funded by the school district, state, or federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) grant.

These programs were much better than their peer mediation counterparts at maintaining process information. Programs tended to maintain data such as attendance and activity logs. Grades, attendance, and persistence in school were tracked for individual students. One program also monitored the school-wide dropout rate. However, like the peer mediation program, efforts to evaluate the programs in any systematic way were minimal or non-existent.

Staff and provider perceptions of the programs tended to be positive. Although teachers grumbled about pull-out programs, most school staff seemed to feel that the additional attention was helpful to participants. Two programs were in their first year and the consensus was that the programs showed promise but assessing effectiveness should wait until the programs had matured.

From the site visits, the lack of resources, either inconsistent or declining participation of staff or shrinking funds, was cited as a major barrier to effective implementation. Only one program (an after-school family literacy program) planned to expand its outreach. Some programs lacked much intensity of service—either they did not meet very frequently or the amount of time per session was very limited. Some programs did not have adequate staff to provide much one-on-one contact with students.

Activities to Change or Maintain the Culture or Climate of the School, Alter or Maintain Expectations for Student Behavior, or Secure Commitment to Norms

We gathered information from program providers on 15 of these types of activities in 10 schools. The programs were evenly split between middle and high schools. Eight of the programs were in suburban schools, 5 were in urban schools, and 2 were in rural schools. Most of the schools had enrollments of over 500 students; 5 schools had enrollments over 1000 students.

In the visited schools, these activities tended to be variations of three basic forms: student clubs, activity/discussion groups, and leadership classes. Student clubs often had anti-drug or anti-violence themes. They attempted to engage students in positive alternatives to problem behavior and sponsored school-wide events and community service projects. The clubs recruited speakers on a variety of topics, sponsored field trips, and organized theme-based events for the school such as dances or "Just say no" week. Often these clubs required individual members to perform a set number of hours of community service or to initiate as a group one or two major community service projects per year. Often these clubs were affiliated with national organizations.

Discussion or activity groups tended to focus on a specific group of students such as students having trouble in school or the lowest grade in a particular school. They often revolved around social adjustment of students such as easing the transition to middle school or high school. Two programs were elective leadership classes. Drawn from the upper grades of the schools, the students in these classes were expected to serve as role models for other students. In one high school, participants led discussions of teenage issues with younger students at the end of the school year.

Seven of the programs were funded through SDFSCA or the school district, three received funds from the school, three received funds from local organizations, five relied substantially on fundraisers, three charged student dues, one was funded by a local grant, and one received funds from AmeriCorps. Cash funds paid for materials, activities, or staff time. In-kind resources consisted mostly of donated time.

Goals tended to focus on creating a drug or violence free environment, building self-esteem and leadership, improving student social interactions and decision-making, and easing the transition to middle school or high school.

Students targeted by these activities varied. Most of the clubs were open to all. Some groups targeted at-risk students or students in a particular grade. Leadership classes targeted students in upper grades with higher grade point averages and teacher recommendations. One discussion group targeted females. These programs had between 20 and 100 participants depending upon the nature of the program.

Program coordinators were generally counselors or teachers. Most were run by only one or two staff members. In one very large high school, 10 teachers instructed multiple sections of a leadership class. A couple of programs were staffed by non-school personnel such as AmeriCorps members. Most program coordinators had received no specialized training. Most providers operated these programs as part of their regular duties (counselors and leadership teachers) or as extra duty (teachers). A few were paid small stipends for coordinating the program.

Assessing implementation of these programs is difficult because of the lack of systematic data. Some reached very few students and lacked much intensity of service. Most lacked the resources to expand. Most attempted to reach the broader school community through special events or mentoring relationships with other students; however, these programs did not measure school-wide effects.

These programs maintained very little data. Classes monitored individual student grades and behavior, activity/discussion groups monitored individual student behavior and attitudes toward the program (one administered pre- and post-test questionnaires to participants). Student clubs monitored attendance and activities. No formal evaluations were planned or had been conducted. Perceptions of the programs were generally positive, but were based on anecdotal evidence of effectiveness for individual students. None of the schools measured any school-wide outcomes against program goals or activities.

Counseling, Social Work, Psychological, or Therapeutic Activity

Information about these types of programs was available from 27 of the 40 schools visited during the site visits. Generally, these programs were, at least from outset, one of the most highly structured and most strongly supported of the different programs reviewed by the site visitors. This should not be particularly surprising, since counseling is part of the everyday school activity. We characterized these programs partly on the basis of the types of populations they serve. Approximately 30 percent of the programs were *universal* and targeted an entire group of students (all students in a class, grade, school, or system). Approximately half of the programs were *selected prevention* whereby students were identified and referred by teachers, counselors, principals, juvenile justice, parents, and by self-referral. Most of these students were identified as having or being at risk of developing behavioral or academic problems. These students had not yet been formally assessed, only referred to some type of intervention. The *indicated prevention programs* constituted 18 percent of the programs reviewed. These students were identified through assessment of test scores (lowest quartile on standardized tests), significant drop in grades, failing courses, substance abuse, truancy, or documented behavioral disruptions.

Mental health specialists (counselors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, family therapists) accounted for about half of the staff, with teachers and administrators making up the remainder. About 10 percent of the programs utilized at least two different disciplines in addressing school violence and related issues.

These programs seemed to have access to significant funds for support. The majority of program providers are supported by district funding for their position, meaning they receive funding from no other identifiable external source. Sources of funding for providers other than district funding were distributed fairly evenly. Roughly one-third of programs were funded by SDFSCA, one-third was funded by state education departments or city and state agencies (other than state and local education agencies), and the last third did not specify a funding source for their programs.

Written goals or mission statements were very common among the programs reviewed (83%). However, these goals varied greatly in their specificity and measurability, with some programs having very general and broad goals and others having highly specific and measurable goals. The remaining programs stated they did not have goals (4%), that they did not specify any goals (8%), or that they developed goals individually for each student (4%).

Formal program evaluations were a part of approximately half of those reviewed, although not all of these evaluations included outcomes or long term tracking of outcomes. This was relatively high compared to other types of programs reviewed during the site visits. Approximately one-third of the programs did not have any evaluation or monitoring of effectiveness. Perceptions of the programs' effectiveness were quite positive among providers, staff and students. Only a small percentage of schools were critical of the way the program operated or its effectiveness.

Exemplary Programs

To illustrate some of the factors that seemed to lead to good implementation, two programs seemed particularly strong. Both of these are counseling programs.

Characteristics of Exemplary Programs. We classified programs as exemplary programs based on the extent to which they possessed certain key characteristics. These characteristics are firmly grounded in the prevention research literature as being the "active ingredients" that are most likely to produce the desired effects. These key characteristics include the following:

> **Large target population.** The two programs had very clear focus and addressed universal, selected, and indicated levels of prevention. Although the second program was focused on tobacco reduction, the development of personal self-management skills and general social skills are clearly seen as 'cross-over' skills that could reduce violence in the school setting.
>
> **Highly trained staff.** The providers for the first program were highly trained with many providers having or working towards doctoral level training in mental health counseling or psychology. The second program had a registered nurse with specific and ongoing training in the implementation of the program.
>
> **Written program materials.** Both of these programs utilized manuals and curriculum guides. Both programs were structured in ways to deliver effective interventions. For example, one program has a step-down 'dosage' model that provides 'booster sessions' to reinforce what has been taught earlier.
>
> **Significant monetary support.** The significance of substantial funding is evident in the quality of both of these programs. A critical level of funding (SDFSCA or State Department of Health) provides the foundation for quality programs, high quality providers, and sophisticated evaluation components.
>
> **Evaluation and monitoring.** The second program used a sophisticated evaluation protocol. This program has a significant history in being well researched and very well regarded in the prevention field. The first program had a less rigorous program, but strong as compared to the programs reviewed in other schools. The first program implemented process and outcome evaluative components that had multiple stakeholders participate in the evaluation processes.
>
> **Integration into the school.** Both programs are highly integrated into the school communities and have evolved from multiple evaluations of needs and resources. That is, the programs have a substantial history within the local setting, have been critically reviewed and adapted to cultural norms, are part of an ongoing feedback evaluation process, and are openly and actively promoted within the local settings.

Program 1. The first program is in a relatively large middle school in an urban setting. The program is currently funded by the Safe and Drug Free School and Communities Act. The program was initiated after consultation with the school district's Safe and Drug Free Schools Advisory Council, as prescribed by legislation.

Program specialists were typically Masters degree level counselors, although many had Ph.D.'s or are enrolled in a doctorate program. The specialists provide individual, group, and family counseling. Some specialists focus on teen dating violence that includes presenting to students issues surrounding date rape and alternatives to violence. The specialists also conduct instructional preventive interventions as well as assisting teachers in technical implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum allows for adaptation to specific school needs.

The programs are evaluated at the district level. Surveys of a random sample are conducted that ask teachers, counselors, and administrators about their level of knowledge of the program in their school (who provides what programs; what was the modality, type, duration, intensity; target population), opinions about the program, and benefits from having the program in their school. This process evaluation is self-imposed by the program. Program staff prepare quarterly summaries of activities conducted by the TRUST specialists.

Program 2. The second program is based in a small middle school in a rural setting. The program is funded from a $50,000 grant from the state to reduce the use of tobacco by students. The program includes the teaching of prevention-related information, promoting anti-drug norms, teaching drug refusal skills, and fostering the development of personal self-management skills and general social skills. The program has explicit performance objectives and timelines for each objective through the year, with a review of the effectiveness of the program by the state legislature occurring at end of two years.

The program consists of a twelve lesson curriculum conducted over 15 class periods during the first year, 10 class periods the second year, and 5 class periods the third year. The program is designed for students attending middle or junior high school, with the first year intended to be implemented in either 6th or 7th grade. The district, which created the overall program for the state grant application, hired the school nurse to implement the program in grades 6 through 8, a modified program with grades 9 and 10, and chose to include life skills training as part of it, and also to serve in the three elementary schools in the county. The total number of students served is 750. One major strength of the program is its clear objectives and performance indicators for evaluation purposes.

In September 1998, the school nurse began implementing the program in grades 6 through 8. She follows set lesson plans and uses the textbooks and materials associated with the program published by Princeton Health Press, Inc. In the school, she is able to teach for 30 minutes every day in the homeroom period rather than only three times per week, which was the schedule in another middle school in the district. The nurse attended a two-day training program in October with other nurses and teachers from around the state so she could conduct and coordinate training for classroom teachers in the county as well. She attended a second training in February that afforded opportunities to exchange experiences and information with other nurses and teachers of the program in the state. The publisher of the program sponsored both training sessions. The funding for the program is from the state legislature's settlement with the tobacco companies.

The district chose the program because it has been rigorously evaluated and recognized by the American Medical Association (AMA), American Psychological Association (APA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for its excellence as a prevention program. The district is monitoring the activities overall as outlined in the grant proposal, but the nurse documents every activity she implements as well as the number of students served and other details. Although she is not required to document activities, she is used to documenting her work as a nurse. Progress reports are completed in the middle of the program (January) and at the end of the school year to assess if the program is being implemented as planned.

Evaluation of the program takes several forms. These include a pre- and post-program survey of the students designed by the nurse that also affords the opportunity for feedback and a formal evaluation measured by pre- and post-tests.

Summary

In summary, our review of 19 different types of programs found large variation across a number of characteristics important for effective violence prevention. Our findings amplified those of the analysis of the survey data (Gottfredson et al., 2000; Crosse et al., forthcoming) that many programs do not meet minimal quality criteria along a number of basic characteristics, including financial support, frequency of participation by students and monitoring and evaluation. These problems, we believe, reflect an overall view on the part of the schools that these programs do not generally have a critical role in preventing problem behavior in the school. In fact, many of these programs are implemented within schools that are seen as being relatively safe and not in great need of such programs.

Unlike the activities reviewed in the previous section, school personnel viewed maintaining school security as the first line of defense against violence and other problem behavior. Security is ubiquitous across all schools and consists of different types of personnel to monitor student activity, as well as hardware. The previous analysis found that this type of prevention activity was implemented significantly better than a number of other prevention measures (Gottfredson, et al., 2000).

Schools use a variety of strategies and measures to promote safety for their students and staff. The most commonly used security effort involves monitoring students and the school building to ensure proper student behavior, as well as to keep outsiders away from the school. Several schools in our study also provide security by conducting drug and weapon searches, sometimes using metal detectors. Other schools may use protection measures such as developing emergency or crisis plans, or using classroom devices such as two-way intercoms, phones, or emergency buttons. Security may take the form of different organizational arrangements in some schools, such as block scheduling (See the section in this chapter on policies to monitor student movement), and the removal of disruptive students. Finally, some schools may use the architectural design of their buildings to promote security.

Schools reported using an average of six security measures, strategies, or devices at their schools. About a third of the schools reported using 7 to 12 different ways to administer security. These schools tended to be urban schools, as well as large schools.

This section elaborates on the security used in schools. The section is divided into three parts. The first describes the security provided by staff. The second section describes the use of law enforcement personnel and the relationship between the police and school. The third sections discusses security devices and strategies.

School Security Staff

A number of different types of security staff are used by schools. The most common are teachers and/or administrators. They are expected to assume these extra duties on top of their regular teaching or other responsibilities and are usually not compensated for the additional work. These individuals perform the most common type of security activity by monitoring student behavior in the halls, cafeterias, bathrooms, parking lots, bus stops and other areas of the school campus where disorder has the potential to arise. Monitoring high traffic areas is seen by many schools as a key prevention strategy as this adult presence is designed to "discourage loitering and misbehavior." While monitoring, staff may be expected to check hall passes, confront unauthorized persons on school grounds, escort school visitors to their destinations, verbally reprimand inappropriate student behavior, break up fights, issue tickets or citations, or escort disruptive students to the office.

Some schools credit monitoring as an effective practice for preventing student disorder. Teachers and administrators at one school felt that monitoring "has been instrumental in preventing misbehavior." Site visitors at another school reported that "we saw a few teachers in the hallways, and it seemed to be an effective practice for minimizing the amount of horseplay and running in the halls." The teachers at a different school did not mind their monitoring roles and felt that it was "effective in preventing problems in and around the school." This kind of practice also lends itself to the "proactive" philosophy of discipline on which several schools commented—monitoring situations and catching incidents before they escalate.

Other schools did not treat their monitoring practices as seriously. Even with an adult presence during the cafeteria period at one school, site visitors observed much disorder. As they reported, "the principal stated that lunch was a good time for students to let off steam and thus he tolerated the disorder." At the same school, teachers did not monitor the hallways during class changes, and site visitors observed a lot of yelling and pushing in the halls. At a different school, teachers were supposed to write tardy notes and check hall passes. Site visitors, however, observed that some teachers were grading papers in the hallways and ignoring students. Some students at another school complained that teachers who were supposed to be monitoring hallways spent more time talking to other teachers. The limited availability of teachers to cover monitoring duties caused problems at some schools. At one school, teacher absences were common and enough substitutes were not always found so that some teachers had to be pulled from hall duty to cover classes.

A small number of schools mentioned having security "aides" that are responsible for monitoring or assisting with other aspects of security (e.g., locking doors and gates). Some schools rely on their school resource officers to provide additional assistance monitoring key problem areas. In addition, some schools have security guards (off-duty police officers or guards from private companies) that were hired to provide daily security for their schools. One large urban school reported having over thirty security guards employed to provide security during regular school hours; however, this seems to be an exception rather than the rule.

Law Enforcement Personnel

The majority of schools we visited reported having some sort of relationship with police officers from their local police departments. The capacity in which these officers serve ranges from very informal to formal, and includes a variety of activities. Three major roles performed by police in local schools are: (a) security, (b) law enforcement, and (c) education.

The most frequently reported capacity in which police officers serve in relation to schools is as some form of school security. Most often, police officers are present at school events such as football games or dances and serve to patrol areas prone to disorder. At a few of the schools, these police officers offer their assistance as a public courtesy. However, at a majority of schools, these officers are off-duty police officers and compensated for their time monetarily or through fringe benefits (e.g., free tickets to all sports events).

In addition to providing security at special school activities, some schools reported that local officers often "drop by" or regularly patrol school grounds or the surrounding areas. A number of the officers who visit the schools are the designated "School Resource Officers" (SRO) and regularly visit area schools. The responsibilities of SROs vary by school and may include providing security, advising school staff on safety issues, teaching prevention program activities, and promoting positive relationships between students and the local police. The salaries for these officers may come from the local police department; or at least partially, from the school district. Other officers simply "drop by" as a public courtesy and have no formal agreement with the schools. Still others are off-duty police officers hired by school districts to act as security guards. Visiting police officers (on- and off-duty) often patrol halls, parking lots, and other areas that have a high risk for disorder.

Police presence in schools is often part of a "community policing" program. As one site visitor noted, the objective of these school-based community-policing programs is to "decrease disruptive behavior by increasing officer visibility." For example, one school site visitor explained, "by roaming the school and the property, the officer became known to the students and helped prevent disruptive behavior by writing trespass charges, smoking citations, and other charges…(making) it "unattractive" to hang out by the school. By taking care of little infractions, the bigger problems went away. The uniformed officer was a common sight at the school, visiting at least 2 to 3 evenings per week and 1 to 2 times during lunchtime. In addition, the officer was immediately available to react to disruptive behavior by writing citations and providing counseling."

The most formal relationship police officers have with local schools involves operating in a law enforcement capacity. Most schools reported calling the police to respond to incidents of disorder and criminal activity, including fighting, weapon possession and substance abuse. In response to disorder, the police may counsel students, issue citations, or make arrests. In addition, several schools reported that local police bring in police dogs to conduct drug and weapons searches. These searchers are usually conducted at random and occur twice a year. One school, however, reported that the local police use their school as a training ground for new K-9 officers and conduct searches more frequently (already 4 times within the current school year). Most schools where these K-9 searches take place indicated that they feel this activity is an effective deterrent to students bringing drugs and/or weapons to school.

Police also operate as educators in their local schools. Some police officers make presentations to students on the duties of police officers, the effects of drugs and alcohol, and the consequences of delinquent behavior. For example, officers at one school brought a pair of special goggles called Fatal Vision that "alters the wearer's vision to approximate intoxication" to give students an idea of how alcohol can impair one's ability to function.

In addition, some police officers offer in-services for teachers and administrators. Topics include how to identify certain drugs, and how to recognize substance abuse and gang symbols. For example, officers brought samples of drugs to one school for teachers and administrators to see and smell.

The majority of the schools we visited reported positive relationships with their local police. These ranged from "good" to "excellent." For example, one site visitor reported, "the relationship between the police department and the school, as evident mainly by the relationship between the principal and the chief of police, is friendly and supportive. The principal and sheriff are friends, and two police officers are usually at major games. In such a small community, the police are well known and have a good relationship with the school." Another site visitor reports, "the link between the school and the police is, of course, a direct one—as a result of the Deputy Sheriff assigned full-time to the school, and the working relationship is said to be excellent."

A few schools, however, reported having a less than positive relationship with their local police department. Characterizations of these relationships include descriptors such as "distant," "strained," and "frustrating." For example, one site visitor reported, "the relationship between the police and the school is distant. The police do not routinely stop by, there are no SROs, and the police officer told us he never talks to the kids or the principal unless he's called." Another site visitor reported, "the relationship between the school and the local police department can best be described as strained. Communication between these two agencies seems to be minimal and the communication that does occur is through formal channels only. The police believe that the school administrators push problems, such as fights, off campus so that it is no longer their problem and the police have to deal with them. The school also complains that when incidents happen off campus, the police bring the students to them to discipline, when the school has no jurisdiction off campus."

Security Devices and Strategies

A number of security devices and strategies were found during the site visits. In this section, we discuss the most common ones found in the schools, including policies to monitor student movement, devices, searches and communication methods.

Policies to Monitor Student Movement. This includes requiring students to have a pass, issued by a teacher or administrator, if they need to leave the classroom for any reason. This seemed to be inconsistently enforced at the schools that were visited. From the site visitors' observations, we did not always see school staff (teachers, administrators, guards) ask students for hall passes. Several of the students we interviewed said that the staff showed favoritism by asking some students for passes and not others. The staff at some schools appeared to ask for a hall pass only if they did not know the student, or if the student seemed suspicious.

Many schools also have a policy of requiring visitors to make themselves known to school staff. Most schools mandate that all visitors sign in at the main office. Some schools require visitors to "buzz in" through a locked main entrance. Most of the site visitors were not, however, asked to wear anything to show visitor status, and not all of them were asked to sign in at the main office. At several schools, however, school staff stopped the site visitors and asked who they were. The schools may have been more lax in their enforcement of the visitor policy because most of the school staff knew that site visitors would be coming.

Some of the schools in our study, mostly high schools and large schools, require staff and/or students to wear ID badges. A few of these badges contain photo identification. This kind of policy often seemed to be mandated at the district level, in order to deter intruders. Schools varied in how well the policy was carried out. One school started its policy recently and it continued to be observed by all staff. Another school only required student identification at dances and sporting events. At one school, the policy was enforced mainly at the beginning of the school year, when staff did not know the students very well. Students stopped wearing their badges after the start of the year, and site visitors observed that at the time of the visit, few teachers and no administrators were wearing their badges.

The architectural design of the school also played a role in how students were monitored during the day. Some schools appeared to be designed with safety monitoring in mind. For example, one school's design included a single driveway leading to parking lots in front and behind the school, one primary entrance where students and visitors must enter, a commons/cafeteria room at the front entrance that is very visible through the glass walls of the principal's office, and wide corridors that branch off from the central commons that provide very few places that are not in clear view. A few other schools also used glass windows to monitor the cafeteria, parking lot, and gymnasium.

Schools that had several buildings complained about their situations. Having students transfer between buildings for classes created a lot of student traffic and potential disorder. One school attributed its vast number of students loitering in the hallways during class time to the size of the school, and the fact that many students have to travel from building to building. Another school complained about students skipping gym class at the end of the day when it required walking to the ball field up the road. To combat this problem at one school, a staff member literally walked their middle school students to high school music classes.

A handful of schools mentioned having fences surrounding their schools to prevent outsiders from coming in. Some of these fences displayed barbed wire. The amount of disorder in these schools did not seem to vary from schools without fences. No one at the school—students, teachers, or administrators—seemed to notice any effects from having a fence around their school.

Another way to assist in monitoring student movement was through the school schedule. Various scheduling issues within a school may promote better orderliness. For example, block scheduling was cited by some schools as an efficient preventive strategy. Students remain in a fewer number of classes for longer periods of time, thus reducing the number of times spent transferring between classes and the possibilities for disruptions in the hallways. Several schools shortened time spent between classes for this reason, as well. Block scheduling also lengthens the amount of time each teacher spends with each class, promoting the chance for more interaction and greater familiarity with specific students. Grade level teams help with this, as well. For example, one school held team meetings three times per week in which teachers could work to resolve issues that might have arisen concerning their students, including discipline issues.

Security Devices. Common devices used for monitoring include walkie-talkies, cell phones, video cameras and metal detectors. Walkie-talkies are usually given to principals and security staff as a way to communicate with one another regarding student safety, while a few schools use cell phones for the same reasons. These devices promote communication among staff and are less disruptive than an intercom system. They are especially helpful in larger schools where tracking down staff may be more difficult. More than half the schools in our study reporting the use of walkie-talkies were large schools. The schools were predominantly urban, as well.

Video cameras are used in schools to monitor the building as well as student behavior. One school talked about wanting to purchase a video camera for the computer room as a way to prevent theft. Several schools mentioned having one rotating camera on school busses, hidden by a camera box thus making students unaware of which box actually holds the camera on any given day. Other schools may use video cameras in the hallways. Most students as well as administrators said that video cameras are ineffective in preventing disorder. The cameras often are not equipped with tapes and rely, instead, on someone viewing the monitoring screen. This responsibility usually rests with the principal, who often may not be in his or her office, and most likely does not have time to sit and watch a video monitor. At one school, a camera was installed in the detention room. Students knew that no one consistently monitored the camera from the principal's office, so they used their detention time for sleep or roaming the halls. Another school had monitors in the administrative offices, but site visitors observed that none were turned on.

To help monitor school grounds, lighting systems are utilized, especially in parking lots. Many schools use alarm systems to protect the school at night and on weekends.

Locks on doors are used as a way to control who is allowed in and out of the school. Every school that was visited mentioned locking their doors. Many schools locked the doors during the day. One school admitted that it did this because of problems with non-students entering the building. Some schools kept only the main entrance open, while a few required a buzz-in system. Some schools only locked doors after the end of the school day. Often, classes that were not in use got locked, as well. Observations at schools showed variations in how well these locks were employed. In some schools, many doors were not locked, some locks were broken, and other ways to get into the building were usually available.

Some schools locked gates on driveways in order to prevent outsiders from entering. One school reported that it put locks on its driveway gates to prevent non-students from driving into the school, causing trouble, then quickly driving off. The strategy eliminated this specific type of incident.

Metal detectors are also a device that was used in less than half of the schools. Metal detectors were more common in the large schools. More than half the schools in our study that used metal detectors had enrollments of more than 1000 students. Half of the schools, also, were located in urban areas. One way to use these devices was to have a standing metal detector that is stationed at entrances. In one school where this was a practice, the detectors were placed in two spots (out of 17 total), but were currently inoperable. One school reported that its metal detector was located in the door of the in-school suspension room. This school used to make students walk through the standing metal detector during random classroom spot checks, but the activity was discontinued because parents told the principal that it violated the rights of the students. Another school mentioned having a standing detector that was used for games, but most schools used hand-held metal detector wands.

Wands were mainly used for random searches. On occasion, they could be used to search individual students suspected of carrying concealed weapons. Many of the schools that used metal detectors did so because of district policy. Districts acquired the wands and mandated their use in the schools. Usually, schools were required to conduct random searches a set number of times per day or week. For example, one district acquired manual metal detectors when it was going through a particularly violent period several years ago. School officials, however, have never used them because they felt no need to do so. Another school was supposed to conduct random searches several times a day, but the principal felt they caused more disruption than they were worth. His school currently uses the wands only occasionally during "tardy sweeps" for students without passes lingering in the halls after the late bell has rung.

We observed some pressure, as well, to have metal detectors in the schools. As one assistant principal pointed out, they needed the metal detectors just to show the public that they have them. Some districts and schools reacted to crime elsewhere in the nation, wanting to make sure that such violent incidents did not happen in their own schools. One superintendent ordered metal detectors for his rural district after coming from a large, urban school. The principal thought he was a "little paranoid" and has never used the wands in his school. He told a site visitor that if he suspected a student of having a weapon (like a knife), he would just bring the student to his office and tell him or her to hand it over.

Searches. Searches were done in several schools that we visited. The purpose is typically to uncover hidden weapons or illegal drugs. The scheduling of the searches varied across schools. In some schools, they are routinely scheduled with staff receiving prior notification; in other schools, they are conducted on a random basis. They are performed by school personnel or local police forces. One school mentioned its relationship with a private security firm to conduct random searches using hand-held metal detectors.

Several schools mentioned using drug-sniffing dogs for random drug searches. For example, the K-9 patrol conducts random drug and weapon searches at one school. As one site visitor described, "No one at the school knows when the searches will take place. On the day of the search, staff and students are alerted and given the opportunity to dump any drug or weapon into the collection bins. Students do so anonymously and are not held accountable for whatever they drop off. If an illegal item is found during the search, however, the student will be prosecuted. The searches have yielded significant amounts of contraband, mostly marijuana."

Some middle schools did not provide student lockers. Students were required to keep everything in their possession throughout the day. This strategy aimed to deter hidden drugs and/or weapons. A few schools did not even allow students to carry standard book bags, but instead would accept clear mesh bags.

Communication Strategies. Schools have implemented a number of strategies to communicate across their buildings in the case of an emergency or when situations arise within classrooms. Most schools had plans in place to respond to natural disasters such as fires, tornadoes, and earthquakes. These plans instruct students and staff what to do if such crises occur, such as specific routes to follow in case of fire, where to assemble if a tornado hits, or how to remain safe during an earthquake. In addition to plans for responding to natural disasters, a few schools have also developed ways to respond to other school-wide emergencies. At these schools, emergency codes are commonly used as a way to alert students and staff to dangerous situations. For example, in one school, certain codes announced over the intercom system would alert students to proceed immediately to a classroom. These have been used in the past when a student was killed in an accident on the way to school and when another student overdosed at school.

Another way to communicate within the school is through classroom intercoms. About half the schools we visited used two-way intercoms and/or phones in the classrooms. These were implemented with safety and communication in mind. The front office can monitor classrooms and communicate with teachers better than they could without these devices. One school stated that it used a two-way intercom and phones in classroom as a way to monitor the class when the teacher steps out.

A few schools, mostly urban ones, implemented emergency buttons in the classrooms. With these devices, teachers can easily signal for help when disruption arises. For example, a site visitor described the procedure at one school, "Classroom teachers have an 'emergency button' in the classroom that connects to the main office. If the button is pushed, someone in the office will contact the classroom via an intercom and ask, 'what's the nature of the emergency.' If the teacher requires assistance, a security officer will be sent to the classroom."

Summary

As described above, schools used many different strategies and practices to maintain security. This was, in fact, the most common type of activity administrators reported as specifically set up to prevent disorder in the school. The most prevalent strategy used throughout the schools was various ways to monitor student and non-student movement within the school. The staff and administrators were primarily responsible for this task. Generally, other types of security strategies, such as hiring special security personnel, use of metal detectors and random searches were also used by a smaller number of schools. These additional strategies tended to be implemented in those schools where student movement and, perhaps safety, may be more of an issue (large, urban schools).

The implementation of many of these strategies was not found to be consistent. For example, site visitors observed a number of times when hall monitors were not consistently enforcing rules and procedures (e.g., use of hall passes). Several site visitors found locks, intended to keep people out, that were broken. Video cameras, when they were in place, were not widely monitored by staff.

School Discipline Practices and Policies

All schools had similar discipline practices and policies. Rules are commonly developed by school districts and used by every school within the district. Almost every school mentioned having student handbooks, which were provided to all students at the beginning of the school year. Individual schools usually have discretion in revising the handbooks, and most do adapt the rules to fit their particular situations and discipline management styles. Many schools discuss the handbooks as they are given to the students, and several require student and parent signatures.

The site visitors felt that students knew most of their school rules, mainly through word of mouth and observation. Students simply paid attention throughout their years of schooling. When asked in the focus groups, most students said that they knew the rules and that they have not changed from when they first began attending school. Many commented that they were "common sense."

In most of the schools, teachers were encouraged to handle discipline problems on their own inside the classroom, unless the incident was serious enough to warrant more attention. As one school summed their school-wide strategy, "If you (the teacher) can deal with the disorder in your classroom, then deal with it. If you need assistance or if violence erupts, call (the security officer) and the front office immediately." Or as another respondent pointed out, "the administration encourages the teachers to

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deal with these types of problems (general misbehavior and horseplay) in the classroom so as not to bring every little problem to the attention of the office staff."

When incidents do occur and discipline action is taken, teachers often are encouraged to follow through with phone calls to the student's parents. Whether or not this happens seems to depend upon the relationship between the teachers and parents, as well as the school's discipline policy. Other teachers prefer not to handle student misbehavior on their own. They would rather remove the disruptive students from their classrooms so that they might teach rather than constantly act as a disciplinarian. In schools with larger discipline offices and procedures in place to systematically handle individual cases, teachers may be more willing, and even encouraged, to send students to the office. For example, in one school, a type of detainment classroom is set aside to hold students until a discipline administrator is ready to meet with them.

Consequences of Violating or Complying with Rules

Consequences associated with rules almost exclusively involved some sort of punishment for violating rules rather than rewards for complying with the rules. The consequences associated with breaking the rules were most often determined by school district staff. Administrators within the schools could change or adapt them as they saw fit. The type of consequence administered depended upon the incident. School officials usually had a great deal of flexibility in deciding the consequence for a particular incident, although certain serious incidents dictated specific consequences. The schools had in place a wide array of consequences, mainly involving either some kind of focused attention on the student, a process of removing and containing the student, or outside involvement from parents or law officials.

For initial infractions or minor rule violations, students were given warnings. Sometimes, teachers or administrators would hold personal conferences with the student, to talk about their behavior and deal with problems before they got out of hand. Removing student privileges was often the first line of defense that schools used for minor offenses. Examples might include revoking a student's break, off-campus lunch, or driving privileges. Students in vocational education programs may be dropped from the program.

Schools try to routinely involve parents in discipline matters concerning their children. In some schools, teachers are encouraged to call parents with every infraction. Other schools routinely call parents when students are absent from school. Some schools send written notices home regarding discipline actions. Parents are almost always involved with student suspensions, and are often required to attend a conference with school administrators. Parent contact is also required for matters of truancy, and may involve attending a school board meeting. At one school, parents are asked to accompany their child to school for a day when the student misbehaves. At another school, parents must sign their children into school after an "overnight suspension." Whether these helped deter future misbehavior or not is unclear.

Detention. This strategy involves containing students in a supervised setting for a set period of time in which they are required to work and study silently. It differs from in-school suspensions because it operates outside of the normal school day, usually before school, after school, or for a block of time on Saturdays. The exception is lunchtime detention, offered at a few of the schools in our study. Teachers usually have the authority to assign this type of punishment themselves. It is commonly given to students for minor classroom offenses such as being tardy or disruptive, and often is used as an automatic response for certain infractions, such as reaching a set number of tardies or unexcused absences. It also almost always precedes more serious consequences such as suspensions. Saturday school detentions, especially, are used as the last step before an out-of-school suspension is issued.

The idea behind this strategy is to remove some of the free time of students and make after-school or weekend transportation inconvenient. The principal and others at one school seemed to think detention was an effective deterrent because "the kids don't like being kept after school or on Saturdays." At another school, students told the site visitors that they'd rather take corporal punishment than waste a Saturday or figure out alternative transportation after school. Parents are often inconvenienced by this type of consequence, as well. According to students at one school, parents often complained about detention and transportation and thought that, "If the school assigns detention, they should provide transportation."

While staff members at several schools thought that detention was an effective strategy due to the inconvenience factor, teachers from other schools did not share those beliefs. At one school, detention was considered to be an ineffective deterrent to misbehavior because attendance was unenforced and students did not have to do their own work if they did attend. According to most schools employing this type of consequence, the major drawback is finding the staff to monitor the detention rooms. Many school districts cannot afford to pay for it.

Corporal Punishment. This approach was used in a number of schools that were visited, mainly in southern schools. Certain rules govern its use: paddling must be administered with an approved instrument (often referred to as the "Board of Education") on the student's buttocks and cannot exceed three "pops," "swats," or "licks" per day; it must be done by the principal or assistant principal, in the presence of another professional and out of the view of students; and parents must sign a release form authorizing its use. In some schools, a waiver must be received from the district. Parents and the community seem to support it. According to the principal in one school, parents think that corporal punishment should be administered sooner, harder, and more often. In some schools, teachers paddled the students, but mostly the punishment came from the principal. Corporal punishment could be administered for any infraction. Students were usually given the choice of paddling over another form of consequence. Many students, when given the choice, preferred to be paddled rather than receive another consequence such as detention. At one school, the students told site visitors that they would rather "take the swats than waste a Saturday or figure out alternative transportation after school." In another school, students preferred two or three licks by their coach to running laps.

Some administrators believed corporal punishment was effective. At one school, a site visitor noted, "the principals themselves are not in favor of corporal punishment, but have resorted to it because of problems getting parents involved in resolving disciplinary issues." Administrators at another school use the paddle when they feel it is necessary to "straighten out a kid." A different principal joked that he would need to take disability for his shoulder if he continued to paddle students as frequently as he was (284 times in one year). On the other side of the debate, some teachers at one school did not believe it works to "fight fire with fire." An assistant principal cautioned that this punishment is not effective with angry students, and admitted its ineffectiveness with repeat offenders. At this school, site visitors concluded that, "it appears that swats are not effective because students do not take them seriously. The guidance counselor said she witnessed a 'swatting' while we were visiting and the youth openly laughed as he was struck."

Suspension. Another common type of consequence, found in every school, is suspension. With this, students are suspended from normal school activities and must serve their sentence either in-school or out-of-school. Out-of-school suspensions were reserved for serious offenses, such as fighting or drugs, and could automatically be assigned, usually for a period of 3 to 10 days. Most schools preferred in-school suspensions, however, because students were removed from their classes and normal school activities but remained in school and not at home watching television or roaming the streets. Also, funding and school performance indexes use daily attendance information, which is affected by students serving out-of-school suspensions.

Like detention, some schools find staffing the in-school suspension rooms difficult. A new person must be hired, or teachers or administrators could proctor the room during free periods. In some schools, however, a video monitor substitutes for an actual person. As suspected, this type of consequence is not taken seriously at these schools. For example, at one school, students serving an in-school suspension had to stay in one room with a video camera for supervision. They were supposed to work on homework, but no one monitored the camera, so they used the time to sleep or walk the halls.

Schools vary quite a bit in how in-school suspensions are carried out. Depending on the infraction and school policy, some students may serve anywhere from a lunch period to several days. While serving time, students are supposed to be working on class assignments. A lot of the schools reported that students waste time in the suspension room. Being bored may serve as the deterrent. In addition to working on class assignments, students may also work on behavior adjustments. For example, at one school, students must participate in 45 minutes of conflict resolution; at another school, students must, in addition to completing school assignments, copy the school rules, a discipline packet, and the County Code of Conduct.

Many schools viewed in-school suspensions as a positive way to deal with student misbehavior. It removes students who cause disruptions and benefits disruptive students, as well, by keeping them at school in a structured learning environment, as opposed to serving out-of-school suspensions. As one school, staff pointed out, "the intent of the program is to keep the students at school in a confined manner, while allowing them to do school work so they don't get behind. The philosophy behind the program is that if one cannot act responsibly in school, one will suffer the consequences of having all their rights and privileges taken away, including the ability to talk to others and to move freely."

Alternative Schooling. Another type of consequence is to completely remove the student from their home school and place them in alternative schooling. With this, students are sent to another school to continue their education for a set period of time. These alternative schools usually are run by the district and are used as a last resort before expulsion. Alternative schooling is a way to reach students when conventional schooling does not work. It may take the form of a separate school during the day, night school, or home schooling. This strategy is often provided for students who had committed more serious infractions, or for repeat offenders for whom other types of consequences did not help. Students with special needs--such as pregnant teenagers, troubled youth, academically challenged students, or those with attendance problems--also could be sent to an alternative school.

Alternative schools accommodate a smaller number of students, usually no more than 15 to 20. Students are sent to the school for a set number of weeks, usually six, and at the end of the term, students are re-evaluated and may be sent back to the home school on probation. Activities at alternative schools vary between districts. Mostly, students are expected to work on regular classroom assignments in order to keep up or catch up to their peers. At some alternative schools, students are required to work on their own, individualized tutoring is provided at others, and some alternative schools may also provide some kind of behavior modification training. Students are given individual attention and are expected to adhere to strict rules.

Many school officials with alternative schooling in their districts thought that this was an effective strategy for maintaining order within their schools. Many view this as a last effort to reform students, before expulsion or dropping out. While many students drop out of school from these programs, the majority of students do return to their home schools. Both the staff and community police officer spoke highly of one center in their district, with the officer quoting, "this is the best thing that ever came to (our community)." Students miss socializing with their friends; and the alternative school in this district has a military-style structure. Parents are inconvenienced by having to provide transportation, as well. In this district, few students return to the alternative school after being sent back to their home schools.

The biggest complaint regarding this strategy is the lack of staff available to monitor the schools. One school thought it was ineffective because it was too small and had a long waiting list.

Transfer. Some schools may transfer disruptive students to another school in the district. This is known at one school as "opportunity transfers." The idea behind this is to remove the student from his or her friends and give an opportunity for a fresh start in a different school. This strategy often is used to break up gangs. For example, students at one school noticed the formation of a gang and school officials acted quickly by transferring the ring-leaders out of the school. Of course, schools that send disruptive students away also need to deal with the disruptive students that other schools send their way. As some teachers and students in one school pointed out, "the students who transfer in from other area schools have much more serious problems than the students (our school) ships out. (We) also feel that the problem is not really solved, it is just dumped on another school. Furthermore, students lose continuity because they fall out of touch with (our) teachers [who] they may have developed positive relationships with."

Expulsion. The most serious consequence a school can administer to students is expulsion. This completely removes the student from the public school system, often for a semester or longer, even permanently. This occurs infrequently and usually is reserved for serious offenses, numerous repeat offenders, or as part of a zero tolerance policy[7] involving weapons, drugs, or assault. The process of expelling a student from school always involves the district and must follow certain legal guidelines. Students usually have the chance to appeal the decision.

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[7] "Zero tolerance" policies imply that a school has predetermined consequences for the violation of certain school policies. The majority of the schools we visited reported that they had some sort of "zero tolerance" policy. The most common "zero tolerance" policies established automatic suspension or expulsion for students who engage in certain activities. The most common behaviors covered by "zero tolerance" policies included fighting, use or possession of drugs, and possession of a gun or other weapon.

Rewards. As noted above, a few schools did mention that they try to promote good behavior through the use of rewards rather than punishment. Citizenship and attendance awards are commonly given to students to encourage these behaviors. Site visitors from one school reported that "extensive rewarding is used to boost the morale of students and teachers." This school had a student of the month, awards at each grade level, and an awards banquet. One program at the school provided rewards such as 5 minutes early release to lunch, food at local restaurants, and T-shirts. Teachers, also, may provide rewards within their classrooms in the form of extra points.

Other programs rewarded students for giving information on school crime. One school offered monetary rewards for information in solving a crime. Another school incorporated this practice with its "Caught Being Good" program, which gives students prizes for telling on their peers. The program uses sponsors to buy various prizes. If a student gives a tip to the principal or assistant principal that leads to the capture of another student doing something wrong, the informant can choose a prize. The site visitor at that school reported that, "The assistant principal felt that this was working to help reduce fighting in the school."

Consistency of Rule Enforcement

The two keys to effective discipline practices are communicating the rules clearly to all students and consistently enforcing the rules. As noted, the schools visited seemed to do an adequate job communicating the rules to all students. Actually getting a good measure of how consistently rules are enforced is difficult from the site visits, since this depends on reports from a relatively small number of persons in the school. Keeping this caveat in mind, site visitors reported that many schools did not seem to be consistently enforcing the rules. This last result overlaps with the conclusions from the national survey, which found schools generally did not consistently enforce rules across situations and students (Gottfredson, et al, 2000). The site visitors found that consistency of rule enforcement was the exception rather than the rule across schools.

Many of the inconsistencies seemed to be related to the seriousness of the offense. Several schools indicated that serious offences were more likely to be met with consistent enforcement. For instance, one site visitor at a large high school indicated that "rules involving violence or drugs are strictly enforced and carry severe penalties" whereas rules involving minor offences such as "no gum chewing in class is only enforced by certain teachers." A site visitor at a large suburban middle school noted, "while smaller infractions such as dress code violations are enforced inconsistently, serious violations are dealt with firmly by school administration."

Consistency in rule enforcement, although less common generally, was reported to exist in several schools. In one suburban middle school, a site visitor concluded, "teachers and administration consistently enforce school rules and policies." At a different middle school, a site visitor summarized that "the principal and counselor follow these consequences strictly. Students and teachers both felt that rules were enforced very consistently. They were unaware of any favoritism in the school, and students said they liked the fact that the principal did not "play favorites" and gave the same consequences to any student breaking rules, regardless of whether or not that student was a star athlete or class clown."

Many students and some teachers specified "favoritism" as the source of rule enforcement inconsistencies. For example, one site visitor reported, "the teachers in the discussion group felt that certain students received special treatment from the administration, such as athletes. Some students felt that the "preps" or richer students received preferential treatment because they were better liked by the principal than other students. Another site visitor at a large suburban high school noted that students "as well as the teachers in the teacher discussion group, felt that the teachers and administration are not consistent in how they handle similar situations with different students and that perhaps there was some favoritism among those students who frequent the discipline office and have gotten to know the staff better and among those students who are athletes." A third site visitor at a large rural high school mentioned that, "it seems that the principal shows favoritism to students who have prominent parents."

Another explanation for inconsistencies was variation in discipline styles across teachers and administrators. For example, as related by one site visitor, "the students felt that some teachers are stricter than others are and take offenses—even minor ones—more seriously and give out greater punishments." Another site visitor at a large urban high school stated that "the major problem with discipline at the school was inconsistencies between assistant principals. Students, teachers and administrators all stated that the two assistant principals handle discipline issues very differently. One assistant principal adheres to the student handbook discipline rules, while the other 'negotiates' with each student, so that the student receives a smaller penalty in comparison."

How problems are handled in the classroom varies from teacher to teacher. Some teachers yell, some threaten with extra homework or a lower grade, and some try to keep students on task to avoid any free time for acting out. As one site visitor reported from her school, "all of the teachers we spoke to talked about keeping ahead of incidents and trying to prevent them by talking to students ahead of time, keeping students on-task, establishing routines, and maximizing the amount of time that the teacher controls the classroom." At the same school, however, a recent incident involved a teacher pushing a child over a chair. At the time of the site visit, the teacher was under investigation. Obviously, at that school, as in many of the schools we visited, classroom management practices varied widely.

Site visitors did observe some variability in the schools regarding what the teachers and administrators are expected to handle. As one site visitor observed, "there is a slight struggle between the administrators wanting teachers to handle more incidents themselves, and teachers wanting administrators to handle lower level cases." Administrators sometimes express annoyance that teachers do not handle more discipline problems on their own, and that they refuse to take responsibility for disorder in their classrooms, let alone in the rest of the school. Administrators complained at one school that teachers did not enforce the rules consistently, and let students out of class early. The teachers disagreed, however, claiming that they handle most disorder problems within their classrooms themselves and that only a very few teachers write up students. At another school, the principal admitted that he handles discipline referrals differently depending on the teacher and student involved. If a teacher writes up students for "every little thing," it is not taken quite as seriously as with a teacher who has good control of the class and writes up a student as a last resort.

A third common explanation for inconsistency was principal personality or management style. For instance, a site reporter at one large urban high school recounted that, "the principal is very supportive when it comes to programs, but not so supportive when it comes to matters of discipline. The principal forces many problems back to teachers to deal with, problems that would be handled by the principal in other schools." A site visitor at a different school illustrates another example: "according to the principal, the administration is committed to setting an appropriate tone and being very clear about the rules. However, the teachers described the principal as having 'no vertebra,' as being 'weak,' and feel the rules are very unclear. The students also feel that he is soft on discipline and avoids dealing with incidents when possible."

Summary

We found considerable overlap in discipline procedures across schools. The rules were generally guided by the school district and involved varying levels of punishment as the offenses became more serious. Very few rewards were structured into the procedures. Schools seemed to have few problems with communicating the rules to all students. However, we found some evidence that rules are not consistently enforced across students. How common inconsistent enforcement was across relatively minor and serious infractions is unclear. Many of these inconsistencies may stem from the general process of letting teachers handle many of the infractions within the classroom. As noted by a number of administrators, teachers do vary on how they deal with disorder problems. Much of the inconsistency reported by students may be related to these differences in individual style across teachers and other staff.

School Climate

An important correlate of the level of school disorder is the climate of the school. For purposes of this report, we have adopted a definition of climate from two sources (OERI, 1993; Kelly, et al, 1986). The essential components of our school climate model are: (a) staff/student relationships, (b) goals, (c) rules and procedures, and (d) facilities and environment.[8] In the remainder of this chapter we discuss our findings on these components.

Staff/Student Relationships

The majority of the sites reported good communication between all parties (teachers, administrators, parents, and students). In some cases, the sites produced contradictory messages regarding relations. For example, a site that reported limited communication regarding management issues also reported high levels of comfort with all parties at the school. A site that reported disrespect toward teachers also reported a family atmosphere between some teachers and students. These two examples portray the complicated and sometimes mixed communication patterns that are documented by site visitors. However, these examples appear to be the exception to the rule. Schools were assessed overall very positively in regards to teacher-student, teacher-administration, and student-student relationships. The two areas that consistently appeared to be the weakest links in the communication chain were parent-school and community-school relations. Even within the strongest examples we found in overall relationships, these two areas were lacking. Exhibit 4-1 provides examples of schools that exhibited very strong relationships.

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[8] These components consist of:

Staff/student relationships: teacher-student relationships, student-peer relationships, teacher-administrator relationships, parent-school relationships, and community-school relationships;

Goals: student academic orientation, behavioral values, and school reputation;

Rules and procedures: instructional management, administration, and guidance; and

Facilities and environment: level of cleanliness, supplies, space, and community environment.

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Exhibit 4-1

Examples of Schools with Good Student/Staff Relationships

One middle school that provides an example of good student/staff relationships appears to begin with this positive climate predicated on the principal's communication style. At this particular school, the principal is described as collaborative and welcoming with teachers and administrators. He is described as genuinely liking the students and is supportive of them. Students in turn, report feelings of respect for the principal. The students appear to treat each other with respect and treat the teachers with respect as well. Teachers believe that the administration is "on the same page" with them—implying clear and consistent communication patterns are the norm. The teachers report their enjoyment of working at this school and that they treat the students "as if the students are their own and expect them to behave accordingly." Communication with parents appears to be "of great importance at the middle school, "and procedures are in place to involve parents when issues arise with students.

A high school setting highlights the importance of creating and maintaining open lines of communication. In this example, teachers and students reported positively on the communication between teachers, students and administration. This positive communication appears to reflect the commitment of the teachers to the school and the students. The teachers report being supported by the administration and that decision-making is handled collaboratively. According to students and teachers, relationships with students are positive. Students feel comfortable talking to teachers about problems. Based on our observations, the interactions between administrators and students were relaxed and friendly.

Both of these examples leave something to be desired in the parent-school relationships and the community-school relationships. Administrators appear to be trying to involve the parents and the community through guest speakers and having parents work as greeters in the schools. Links with the community generally are through parents and this appears to be the primary format that most schools take in engaging the surrounding community into the life of the schools.

These impressions from the site visitors seem to support the quantitative survey data collected during the site visits. As noted in the introduction, these surveys were administered concurrently to teachers and students. They included questions on school morale, which was rated very high. Similarly, the students who completed the survey rated their relations with other students as very good, indicating overall positive relations.

An example of poor relationships in a high school setting begins with teachers reporting that they don't have the support of their administration. Further, the teachers report that the administration does not value their input and, therefore, the administration does not have "buy-in" with the teachers on policy issues. The level of communication between teachers and the administration was reported to be not very good. Students also reported not being treated with respect and that classes were too big. Parent involvement at the high school level is notoriously low. The relationship between the school and the local police department can be best described as strained. Communication between these two agencies seems to be minimal, and that communication is through formal channels only.

These impressions from the site visitors are supported from the survey data collected during the site visits, which indicate that teachers rated their school morale as very low. Similarly, the students who completed the survey rated their relations with other students as poor, indicating generally poor relations at this particular school.

When looking at school climate through the lens of relationships, a trend was observed that cut across school levels as well those strong and weak examples of school relations. This trend was the active engagement of the principal into the 'life-flow' of the school. That is, we often observed highly visible, communicative, and engaging principals working at schools that had some of the strongest climate relations. These principals were observed in the cafeteria with students, talking with staff and teachers informally, and generally engaged in the on-going, daily activities of the schools, or the life-flow. These principals were also described by teachers as collaborative, supportive, open to ideas and input, and "on the same page." Students often described these principals as caring, approachable, and fair. Conversely, principals in some of the schools with the least healthy relations were often distant, narrowly focused, and even absent. These principals were often described as non-collaborative, unapproachable, unengaged, and intimidating by teachers and students. Principals' communicative style within the school culture appears to permeate the entire system to some degree, and this can facilitate healthful or harmful relations.

Goals and Mission

The second component of climate examined is the school's overall sense of purpose and mission. This includes the academic orientation of staff and students, behavioral values, and the general reputation for academics and safety. The visited schools fell into four general types. The first type of school tended to be characterized by a strong focus on academics on the part of students and staff. They tended to have a good academic reputation relative to other schools in the community and above average performance on standardized tests. Examples include a small middle school in a large city. It is a magnet school where the students are admitted on the basis of academic performance. Most go on to magnet high schools. Although physically unassuming and somewhat dreary, the school supported numerous computers and had recently been the cited in a newspaper article for its use of technology. Another rural school had recently gone from worst to first academically in the district and was "working hard to become a superior academic setting." These schools tended to be relatively small.

The second type of school focused primarily on its academic mission but was struggling to improve performance. Although these schools were often large and located in neighborhoods with economic or social problems, they managed to keep academics in the forefront. One large suburban high school had a generally poor reputation but was viewed by students and staff as "one of the best kept secrets in the district." Students were generally serious about learning and teachers took their roles seriously. Neighborhood gangs viewed the school as neutral territory. Although surrounded by a chain link fence, the school gave the impression of being an oasis in the surrounding community.

The third type of school was characterized by wide variation in academic reputation and performance, but was notable for a strong emphasis on controlling student behavior and maintaining discipline. Some were in communities where students or parents did not place high value on education. Some were in communities where order and respect for authority were important. Others struggled to maintain order in large schools with diverse populations. In one rural middle school, the "emphasis is rather more on behavior than academics." The school had a reputation as strict and controlling and seemed to fear disorder more than it had experienced disorder. The school day was structured to limit opportunities for students to act out in any way. Another rural high school in a "conservative and old fashioned" community also placed considerable emphasis on discipline. "Teachers [said] that if there was as much attention to the curriculum and instruction as there is to behavior, the school could solve some of its real problems—student apathy toward studies, parental apathy, truancy, and tardiness." One urban high school with a good academic reputation had made improvements in discipline and security over the past few years. However, students "felt the administration was preoccupied with discipline and focused more on rules related to the dress code than those concerning safety or education." Staff pointed out "that there are more administrative staff assigned to handling discipline than there are handling academic issues."

The fourth type tended to place a great deal of emphasis on extra-curricular aspects of school. Their reputations were often defined by their sports teams. They tended to be in communities where the social aspects of schools were as important as the academic aspects. In one low achieving rural high school, teachers felt that students and the community were not committed to education. Few students went on to post-secondary education and sports were important. Similarly, in another rural high school, teachers felt that "students are not very interested in learning and many come to class just to socialize with their friends." The school supported a very successful football team. One suburban high school was characterized by students and staff as lacking diversity and as being, "a throw-back to the 1950's, focusing on pep rallies…[and] sports." The emphasis on academics was not strong. Both students and staff reported that the school had a reputation for extra-curricular activities, and students reported having a reputation as "stuck-up snobs."

Rules and Procedures

Another aspect of school climate is the school's approach to rules and school management. This includes the fairness and consistency of enforcement of rules, instructional management, and principal leadership. Procedures for enforcing rules and dealing with discipline issues are described in another section. In this section, we discuss some overlapping themes and approaches that contribute to school climate.

Although classroom teachers had the primary responsibility for discipline in all cases, schools fell into two general types. In the first type, teachers tended to deal with all but the most serious discipline issues within the classroom, including setting punishments (such as detentions) and calling parents if necessary. Administrators dealt only with the most serious or intractable problems. In many cases, these schools were small or did not have the resources to allocate administrators to deal with discipline full time. In the second type, teachers tended to deal with small infractions within the classroom and then refer students to an administrator for repeated or more serious infractions. The administrator(s) (usually an assistant principal or dean) was responsible for assigning punishment and contacting parents. These schools tended to be larger or have a larger administrative staff.

School approaches to disorder and discipline ranged from proactive to reactive. Schools with proactive approaches tended to enforce rules more strictly and deal with small incidents quickly before they escalated. Reactive schools dealt with situations and incidents as they happened. Proactive schools tended to have a strategy for managing the school day and dealing with discipline. This strategy could either be explicitly stated or just a shared understanding among administrators and teachers.

No matter what the approach toward discipline in the study schools, consistency of rule enforcement emerged as an important issue especially among students in our focus groups. Both middle and high school students were quick to note real or perceived inconsistency in the enforcement of rules. This included variation among teachers in their tolerance for classroom disorder, variation among administrators, selective enforcement of rules, and variation in enforcement by type of student (e.g., good students, athletes, or students with prominent parents). Perceptions of inconsistent enforcement were widespread among students and less so among teachers and administrators. This highlights the difficulty of maintaining a balance between enforcing rules consistently and maintaining the flexibility to deal with students as individuals.

Another theme that emerged was the importance of principal leadership in setting the overall tone in a school regarding discipline and enforcement of rules. Principals varied in their involvement with school management and discipline. Some took a "hands-on" approach and were involved in the day-to-day application of discipline. They were often a frequent presence around the school building and encouraged teachers to be a presence outside the classroom as well. Others left discipline to teachers and other administrators. Whatever the level of direct involvement in discipline and management, school staff expressed more satisfaction if the principal set clear expectations, communicated regularly with staff, and gave them a voice in management issues.

Facilities and Environment

Site visitors observed the condition of the school buildings and grounds, looking for signs of graffiti, litter, vandalism, and disrepair. Most of the schools were reported to be clean, both inside and out. If graffiti appeared, it was usually painted over by the next day. If litter was present, usually only a small amount was observed on the school grounds or in the bathrooms, although several schools did report areas littered with cigarette butts outside the school. Vandalism was rarely seen, but a few site visitors did observe bathrooms without stall doors or supplies.

Regarding the condition of the school buildings, some variety was shown in the schools in this study. Some schools were new or recently renovated, while others showed their age with leaky roofs and crumbling architecture. A few schools had broken windows, and site visitors at one school did not observe any fire extinguishers at the site.

No trends emerged in the amount of physical disorder and instructional level (high or middle school), but schools did show some trends in terms of urbanicity and size. Urban schools were more likely to have disorderly appearances, and small schools, along with rural and suburban schools, were more likely to be clean and in good condition.

The community environments sometimes contrasted with the school ecologies. For example, the surrounding neighborhood of a large urban middle school is run-down with boarded-up and abandoned houses scattered throughout the area. A large public housing project that has a very poor reputation in this large city is situated next to the middle school. Counter to what one might expect of the school's physical environment, it boasts large colorful murals outside as well as inside. Colorful banners with positive and motivational messages hang in the halls of this school. Pictures of famous African Americans fill bulletin boards in the hallways. Very little graffiti exists and fresh paint is apparent.

These positive environmental conditions create a "safe haven" for these students, most of whom live in environmentally stressful situations.

These positive environmental conditions at schools may foster stronger school attachment, which has been linked to reduced school disorder and is a protective factor for youth (Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller, 1992). That is, students for whom school attachment is high have more at stake—more to lose—by misbehaving in school than students with low school attachment. Schools with high levels of school attachment among students, hence, are more likely to have lower levels of disorder and higher levels of safety than schools with low levels of school attachment.

Chapter 5

Planning

An important part of managing and controlling disorder in a school is the use of planning to assess needs and make decisions on appropriate actions. To this end, this chapter addresses the question:

> *To what extent do schools use sound planning processes and information on school prevention options to improve school management?*

Analysis of national survey data (Gottfredson, et al., 2000; Crosse, et al., forthcoming) found that 57 percent of schools seem to use sound planning structures when deciding on what types of prevention measures to use. These analyses also found that planning structures were much more common at the school level. That is, prevention programs and activities were stronger on a school-wide, rather than on a program-specific basis.

In this chapter, we elaborate on these results by examining the planning processes used by six schools that were found, in the aforementioned survey, to have sound planning processes. The goal is to try to characterize more specifically how these schools operate, how planning relates to specific prevention activities and some of the reasons these particular schools seem to be more successful in the planning process.

The first section describes the methods of sample selection and data collection. The next section describes the characteristics of the planning structures or processes that these schools have implemented, including their functions, outcomes and level perceived of success. In the third section, similar patterns across schools are described. In the final section we summarize the results and draw out some general conclusions about the methods used by these schools for planning prevention activities.

The study team developed a general definition of planning, which is as follows.

> *The application of a school management structure or process to reduce problem behavior in schools. Sound planning entails the use of information in the ongoing systematic (a) assessment of needs, (b) development of goals and objective, (c) selection of prevention activities, and (d) evaluation of those activities.*

For our examination of planning, we selected a purposive sample of six secondary schools that reported sound planning practices related to prevention in the national survey and conducted telephone interviews with a staff member in each school. (These six schools are in addition to the schools that we visited.) The six schools selected included three high schools, two middle schools and one combination middle school and high school. Two of each of the schools were urban, suburban and rural respectively. Their populations ranged from 690 students to 1,600 students. In regard to the nature of the schools' curricula, three of the schools were "specialty" schools (such as magnet or technical schools), and three of the schools were nonspecialty schools.

Characteristics of Planning Structures

The kinds of school-level planning structures or processes implemented varied across schools. The schools reported having leadership/administrative teams (principal and vice-principals), safety committees, discipline committees, school advisory councils or site-based management teams and a few miscellaneous committees initiated to deal with specific safety or discipline issues. Regardless of the variability between schools, all of the schools reported at least one school-level planning structure that addresses the prevention or reduction of problem behavior.

The main functions of the majority of the planning structures are to assess school needs, to develop goals based on needs and objectives to meet these goals. This may or may not result in the selection and implementation of prevention activities. Some of these planning structures are specifically focused on school safety. As such, these safety-focused planning structures are primarily concerned with issues such as fire safety, evacuation procedures, and how to prevent outside intruders who might pose a threat to the school. Substance abuse and delinquency prevention do not appear to be the current main focus for most of these schools, although the respondents acknowledge that their planning structures would address these issues if the need presented itself.

Several commonalties were noted across school-level planning structures. In particular, four main themes emerged regarding the characteristics of school-level planning structures. One theme was that prevention was not the main focus of the school-level planning. Although all of the schools reported having planning structures that deal with prevention programs, this does not appear to be the primary function of most of these structures. The main function of the majority of the planning structures is the ongoing assessment of school needs and the development of goals and objectives to address these needs. Other functions include: (a) review of safety and security procedures; (b) development of the School Improvement Plan; (c) discussion of current school issues; (d) evaluation of school services; (e) organization of campus activities; (f) review and revision of school rules and polices; and, (g) in the case of the administrative teams, overall management of the school.

A related theme was, when a "prevention program" concern did exist, school-level physical safety and security was more likely to be stressed than individual-level activities (e.g., curricula designed to build resistance skills). The focus on physical safety could be a reaction to recent publicity involving school shootings—one respondent noted that the "media hype" contributed to several safety reforms initiated in that school. As a result, most safety-oriented committees focus on security and safety issues such as crisis management related to natural disasters and outside intruders. Other prevention issues (e.g., preventing student substance abuse or other problem behavior) are incorporated into the goals "to the extent it's considered a need." Most of the schools do not recognize this as a current need but asserted that any district policies on the issue were being implemented (usually education). For example, when asked about the extent to which school-level planning structures focus on substance abuse issues, one respondent reported, "to the point of making sure we have adequate education on it. It hasn't been a big problem in the past, so it's just something we have to be made aware of and make sure we keep the students educated."

A third characteristic of the structure was membership diversity. Most of the schools reported that their planning structures not only included administrators, but also teachers, students, parents and/or community members.

A fourth characteristic is using multiple sources of input when making final decisions. For the most part, the selection or discontinuation of prevention activities is a process involving a variety of concerned individuals. In most cases, selection or discontinuation involves input from a variety of outside resources (e.g., research, solicitors, resource centers, and consultants) as well as from members of the school and surrounding community (e.g., students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members). Even in those cases where the principal makes the final decisions, input is solicited and considered from a variety of sources.

When asked about the outcomes of these planning structures, respondents were remarkably similar in the nature of their responses. Rather than noting specific programs or activities, most of the respondents expressed the major outcomes of these structures in terms of perceptions. Most noted increased perceptions of safety on the part of students, parents and teachers. As stated by one respondent, "our kids feel safer. Parents think their kids are in a safer environment and I feel everyone is in a win-win situation from it (the implementation of a planning structure)."

For the most part, the respondents reported that most students, faculty, parents and community members appear to be pleased with the outcomes of these planning structures. Several of the respondents noted that school community members were satisfied because they see these planning structures as an avenue to express their concerns and suggestions for improvement. For example, one respondent reported, "I think they (the school community) are very much satisfied because they know that if they have any concerns, they can address them here…they are a vital part (of the planning process) so they feel good." Not surprisingly, the majority of the school-level planning structures rely on the members of the school community and surrounding community as either members of or advisors to these planning structures.

Factors Associated with Development of Planning Structures

Across these six schools several themes emerged that seemed related to their success.

Freedom. Most schools stated that their districts give them the freedom to develop and select their own prevention activities as long as they are not in conflict with any district policies. Some mentioned that requests for money often invite more district involvement. One respondent reported, "the school sites are left to a great degree to what they need to do…typically, we're free to choose our own (activities)." This conclusion is important when considered in relation to the finding from the national survey that programs implemented by school personnel, rather than those mandated by an outside entity, tended to be better implemented (Gottfredson, et al., 2000).

Budget. Surprisingly, budget constraints were not listed as major factors affecting the implementation of prevention activities. However, all respondents noted that increased funding could provide additional opportunities currently not available due to budget constraints.

Formation of Structure. Three reasons were reported as factors leading to the formation of school-level planning structures. A few respondents made reference to recent media coverage of incidents of school violence ("media hype") as a factor contributing to the perceived need for prevention planning. Other respondents noted a state or district mandate as a catalyst for the formation of these planning structures. Still others reported that the development of their planning structures was related to safety concerns (or assessed needs to improve safety) which may or may not have been based on real incidents of violence that were occurring on these school campuses.

Level of Safety. All six respondents reported that their schools were safe and noted that incidents of disorder were few and most were of a minor nature. Serious threats of violence or other safety issues were reported as few and far between and considered the exception rather than the rule.

Principal Management Style. All of the respondents indicated a similar management style of their principals. Although these principals tend to delegate a great deal to their vice-principals, most of the respondents reported that their principal was well informed and in touch with the climate of the school. Most of the principals had very little daily contact with students and teachers, but were still open to suggestions from all members of the school community with regard to prevention issues.

Non-Quantitative Outcomes. Most of the schools do not look at quantitative outcomes, noting size and level of safety of the school as contributing factors to their approach. As one respondent noted, "to have a quantitative goal in a school of 1600 kids (is unreasonable)…and they (the goals) are event-driven. It's driven by the kids, not by any (quantitative outcome)…You're sort of in a reactionary mode, so everything is a prevention and, of course, we react when we need to."

Meeting Frequency. Our content analysis revealed that most of these planning structures meet regularly. Some meet as frequently as once per week and a few meet as infrequently as once per school year. A few meet only when the need arises.

Needs Assessments. All of the schools have planning structures that conduct needs assessments of some form or another. These range from reviews of school data (number of incident reports) and informal discussions with interested parties to lengthy surveys involving students, faculty, and/or parents. In turn, these assessments are used by the planning structures to develop goals and objectives, and contribute to the selection and development of prevention activities. These planning structures ensure that prevention activities are evaluated and that goals and objectives are adjusted in order to meet changes in need.

Summary and Discussion

This chapter has described the process by which some of those strongest in school-level planning engage in sound planning practices. Although the kinds of planning structures that have been implemented may vary across these six schools, similarities between these structures and between the schools themselves are evident. All six schools have ongoing school-level planning structures that assess the needs of the schools and develop goals and objectives to meet these needs. In addition, when appropriate, these structures select prevention activities and evaluate those activities on a regular basis. In general, we found that the manner in which these planning structures operate is consistent with sound planning as defined by our study team.

Aside from these similarities in process, these planning structures also demonstrated similar structural characteristics. All the respondents reported that their school's planning structures address prevention, but indicated that prevention was not the main function of the structure. When prevention is addressed, security and safety, rather than the substance abuse or delinquency prevention seem to be the main focus. In addition, these structures have diverse membership and consult a variety of resources when selecting or discontinuing prevention activities.

As for similarities between these planning-strong schools, these schools tend to be allowed by the district free to select their own prevention activities and are not burdened by budget constraints. These structures formed as a response to disorder (a result of incidents of violence within the school or incidents reported in other schools), or as a result of a state or district mandate. In addition, these schools are perceived as safe and exhibit similar styles of principal management. Furthermore, respondents noted a lack of emphasis on quantitative outcomes.

This chapter does not attempt to make generalizations about the extent to which all schools practice sound planning. However, it does describe the extent to which those schools identified as strongest in the area of school-level planning are using sound planning and information on school prevention options to improve school management. All six schools have ongoing planning structures that assess the needs of the schools and develop goals and objectives to meet these needs. When appropriate, these structures select prevention activities and evaluate those activities on a regular basis.

In summary, the extent to which schools use sound planning and information on prevention options to improve school management is related to the level of a perceived need to do so. In the case of the six schools selected for this portion of the study, each of them has at least one school-level planning structure that regularly assesses (through formal or informal need assessments) the need for reduction or prevention of problem behavior. If a need is uncovered, the schools (through these school-level planning structures) further engage in sound planning and use of information on prevention options.

Chapter 6

Distinguishing Middle Schools with Different Levels of Disorder

In this chapter, we address the study question on characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools. We identified a limited number of schools based on a measure of disorder that enabled us to array schools on a continuum from high to low disorder. Drawing on all of the findings from the previous chapters, we compared these two sets of schools to identify policy-relevant differences. Although the study method limits the extent to which we can assert causal relationships, these differences suggest approaches that policy-makers and school personnel may wish to pursue to increase school safety.

The analysis discussed in this chapter is restricted to middle schools. This was done because of the limited variation in safety across the high schools in the sample.

Method

In answering the study question on characteristics and processes that distinguish schools with different levels of disorder, we relied heavily on the quantitative information gathered from the surveys of students and teachers at the intermediate level. Several measures of school crime were created. The measure that we used to distinguish schools was the percent of students reporting that they were the victim of a serious crime (threatened with a weapon or robbed) in school during the current school year. We recognize that the schools in our groups represent different points along a continuum.

We conducted analyses across all schools. Separately for the middle schools and senior high schools, we identified the three schools with highest percentages on this measure and the three schools with the lowest percentages.

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Analysts then sought to identify any characteristics or processes that differentiated schools in the two groups. The characteristics and processes on which we compared the schools are covered in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report:

- School characteristics: size, urbanicity, student demographics;
- Community characteristics: crime and safety in surrounding community, risk factors for violence (poverty, unemployment, single parent, mobility, age, race);
- Programs: number, type, and quality of programs and strategies used to prevent violence and other problem behavior;
- Security: security staff, police involvement, and security devices;
- Discipline: procedures to administer, record, and report disciplinary action; types of disciplinary actions, zero tolerance policies, and rules; and consistency of rule enforcement;
- Climate: staff/student relationships, goals, rules and procedures, physical environment; and

We also performed a similar analysis within the original selection cells that, based on the intensive level study data, yielded a sufficiently large difference between schools on the disorder measure. This analysis allowed us to control for some of the background characteristics that may affect disorder. Again, we sought to identify any characteristics or processes that differentiated schools in the two groups.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, as a whole, the 40 schools in our sample tended to have relatively low levels of disorder. In addition, middle schools tended to have higher levels of disorder than high schools. For the high schools, less than five percent of students in the low disorder schools had experienced being robbed or threatened with a weapon; approximately 16 percent of students in the high disorder schools were victims of such violent incidents. This range (11%) was exceeded by the range for the middle schools (33%). Between 28 and 37 percent of students in high disorder middle schools experienced one or more violent incidents.

Because of the small variation in our sample across high schools, the results described in the remainder of the chapter are restricted to middle schools. For high schools, we decided against comparing and contrasting schools with "high" and "low" levels of disorder because clearly distinguishing among schools on school safety was impossible.

We present overall findings by levels of disorder. In exhibits, we provide more detailed information on specific schools.

Low Disorder Schools

Although these schools varied considerably along a number of characteristics, they shared some important principles in their operation and atmosphere. They had a clear consistent approach to maintaining order and discipline. They did not merely react to problem behavior, they worked to ensure that problem behavior did not occur or that small problems did not escalate. In these schools, teachers and administrators had internalized this ethos and seemed to feel that maintaining order was a shared responsibility. School staff conveyed clear expectations for behavior to students that went beyond publicizing rules.

- The schools all had strong principals. Their leadership styles differed but they were clear leaders and were active and involved in the life of the school.
- School staff, especially teachers, viewed themselves as working on a team. Teachers supported each other and all shared a sense of academic mission.
- Whether required to or not, teachers were actively involved in maintaining order both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers monitored hallways between classes, shared lunch duty, and were generally observant.
- Relationships among students, teachers, and administrators were generally positive and characterized by respect and collegiality. In the one case where relations between teachers and the principal were strained, other factors compensated for the problem such as collegiality among the teachers, good relationships with the students, and the strong academic mission of the school.

Exhibit 6-1

Profiles of Low Disorder Middle Schools

School A

School and community characteristics: This is a small magnet school in an urban area. It has an enrollment of about 200, almost all of whom are African American. About 20 percent qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Enrollment is competitive. Students come from a wide area of the city and are accepted based on grades and test scores. The school is located in an urban neighborhood with moderately high levels of unemployment and poverty.

Programs: The school participates in a gang prevention program, which is district-wide. Some students are involved (on a voluntary basis) in support/discussion groups for boys and girls that deal with issues of growing up and adolescence. School A has block scheduling and no bells.

Security: The school employs no security devices save for walkie-talkies. All doors except the main entrance are locked. No specific staff are responsible for security, but teachers and administrators keep on the lookout for intruders. The school also participates in a citywide "safe corridors" program, which uses parent volunteers to watch students as they make their way to and from city bus stops before and after school.

Discipline: No administrative staff are responsible for discipline. Teachers are expected to handle most issues in the classroom. In addition to handbooks and assemblies, many rules are posted throughout the school. Everyone is aware of the rules and students feel that they are mostly reasonable.

Climate: The school is very academically oriented and students are highly motivated. Relationships between the students and the teachers and counselor are very positive. Students get along well with one another and teachers are collegial and feel they are part of a team. The principal is a strong leader, but some teachers chafe at her rather authoritarian style.

Disorder: Disorder is extremely low with only minor incidents. School staff are more concerned with neighborhood disorder than disorder within the school. Cars are occasionally vandalized and a student was recently in an altercation with someone from a neighborhood middle school.

School B

School and community characteristics: School B is a suburban school with an enrollment of about 900. Students are mostly white with about 30 percent qualifying for free or reduced price lunches. The school reflects its surrounding community.

Programs: The school has a building-level SDFSCA coordinator. The prevention programming consists mostly of classroom presentations and special days devoted to presentations. The school offers an anti-peer pressure club that sponsors various school-wide activities. Troubled students can be referred to a district program for delinquent youth.

Security: A video camera (inoperative at the time of our site visit) is installed near a public phone and camera boxes (but not necessarily cameras) have been installed on all school buses. The school has log books for signing in and out of classrooms and staff wear ID badges. The school also has a security plan in case of a serious incident.

Discipline: Rules are clear and generally understood. Teachers are expected to handle most discipline issues within the classroom including documentation and calling parents. Standards for behavior are high and communication with parents is good. The school attempts to nip problem behavior in the bud. It also uses in-school suspension.

Climate: School B is a friendly, supportive environment. Relationships among staff, students, and administration are good. The principal is a strong leader. Turnover among teachers is very low.

Disorder: Disorder consists mostly of tardiness and "disrespect." Most roughhousing occurs on school buses. Staff maintain a constant presence in the hallways. The building is old, but clean and well maintained, although school staff reported that the back doors are outdated and in need of replacement.

School C

School and community characteristics: School C is rural with about 300 students. A little over three-quarters are white and about 40 percent qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The school is located in a small racially segregated community.

Programs: The school has two mentoring programs, one that pairs gifted and talented students with those having difficulty and one that uses high school mentors. Grade levels are physically separated and the school employs block scheduling. The school has a crisis prevention team.

Security: The school is equipped with motion detector alarms, and each classroom has a 2-way PA system. Administrators have walkie-talkies. Doors are locked during the day and staff monitor hallways and the lunch room.

Discipline: School C has clear rules and a strict dress code. Students generally feel the rules are common sense. Both teachers and administrators are responsible for discipline issues. The school uses corporal punishment and in-school suspension. The district has an alternative school.

Climate: The school and community are small—everyone knows everyone. Relationships within the school are generally good. The school was described as "conservative but caring." The principal is a strong and authoritarian leader who garners respect from staff and students. Teachers work in a team atmosphere. Students and teachers hold a strong respect for authority in the school. The building is newly renovated. Students do well on the state tests.

Disorder: Disorder is low. Most problems revolve around tardiness. Rules are strict, well known, and enforced.

High Disorder Schools

These three schools also varied considerably along a number of characteristics. In addition, two had clearly improved greatly in recent years. Nevertheless, they shared at least some of the same types of problems. These schools lacked a clear approach to discipline (or staff had not yet internalized the approach). Some had strict rules, but they did not convey clear behavioral expectations.

Staff in these schools tended not to function as a team. Communication between teachers and administrators was sometimes poor. A sense of shared responsibility was relatively weak. An example of this was the school where teachers and the campus police pointed fingers at each other over between-classes monitoring. Similarly, teacher involvement in discipline outside the classroom tended to be inconsistent.

Perhaps because of the problems mentioned above, students in these schools have more opportunities to get into trouble than students in low disorder schools.

Exhibit 6-2

Profiles of High Disorder Middle Schools

School D

School and community characteristics: School D is a large school in an urban area. It enrolls a little over 1000 students, the majority of whom are from low-income families. A little over 50 percent are Hispanic and about 40 percent are African American. Students are bused in from many problem neighborhoods.

Programs: The school has a peer support group for at-risk students. It is a district-wide program. It also offers tutoring, mentoring, and counseling to at-risk students. School D has instituted professional development dealing with classroom management as well as common planning time for teachers. The school uses in-school suspension.

Security: Search wands (hand held metal detectors) are mandated but rarely used. The campus is surrounded by a fence with locked gates; however, the fence has gaps through which anyone can pass. Administrators have walkie-talkies and classrooms have intercoms that may or may not work. The school employs a campus police officer.

Discipline: Teachers and administrators are responsible for enforcing discipline. The school has general rules and a code of conduct. Rules are posted. The school monitors incidents through individual records as well as a database of referrals. The district allows troublesome students to be transferred to other schools. The school has recently instituted school uniforms.

Climate: The school is working on changing its reputation, which used to be terrible. It has a new principal who has instituted new policies and hired many new teachers. The school also has a new focus on academics. Relationships are improving but tension and finger pointing continues between the campus police and teachers regarding laxness in monitoring students between classes.

Disorder: Disorder has decreased recently with the new principal and new policies. Most disorder involves roughhousing, fighting, and theft. Recent serious incidents included an attempted rape[9] and a student who brought a gun to school. Disorder is more likely in the lunch area and in bushes outside the school.

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[9] The principal voiced his suspicion that the incident being investigated was a consensual encounter between two students.

School E

School and community characteristics: School E is a small rural school with about 200 students. Almost 70 percent are African American and about 80 percent qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The community is poor and agricultural. It has few activities or outlets for youth and is experiencing an increasing drug problem.

Programs: The school participates in a drug abuse resistance program (although the instructor, a police officer, was described as not reliable). A peer mediation program was not being implemented during the year of the study because of lack of staff time. The school also uses a character-focused curriculum and has a family literacy program that deals with academic and social problems of students.

Security: Doors are locked, and the school plans to install motion detectors in computer labs. Staff use a one-way intercom. The school has emergency plans for tornadoes and nuclear accidents.

Discipline: Rules are posted and are well known. Some of the many rules are ignored. Teachers are responsible for discipline but can send students to the principal. The school uses corporal punishment and has access to an alternative school.

Climate: Rules are fairly strict and staff are involved in students' lives in and out of school. The principal is active and involved but sends inconsistent messages to students regarding behavior (for example by paddling and then hugging students). The building is shabby and run down

Disorder: Some students felt fighting was a problem. The most common problems were foot traffic across school grounds by outsiders (school campus not fenced), and boys throwing rocks and dirt clods.

School F

School and community characteristics: School F is in an urban area. It enrolls about 900 students, about 80 percent of whom qualify for free or reduced price lunch and about 60 percent are identified as at-risk; approximately 54 percent of the students are African American. The surrounding community (which is the catchment area) is a very poor neighborhood characterized by high unemployment and drug activity.

Programs: The school has a building SDFSCA coordinator. Prevention programming consists of classroom presentations and activities throughout the year. The school also offers an athletic club designed to foster positive behavior. Students who have serious problems can be referred to a behavior modification program.

Security: Staff have walkie-talkies and classrooms are equipped with emergency buttons.

Discipline: Rules are published and posted. Teachers are the primary enforcers of discipline. The school has instituted corporal punishment, in-school suspension, and school uniforms. Block scheduling limits the time students spend at lockers. Teachers are required to monitor hallways but many do not.

Climate: The school has serious academic problems and a relatively new administration. The principal is also principal of the feeder high school so is not much of a presence at School F; an assistant principal is largely responsible for school discipline. Relationships between teachers and students are generally good, but teachers did not exhibit much evidence of caring. Communication problems exist between teachers and the administration. The school lacks a cohesive team atmosphere.

Disorder: Disorder has decreased with the new administration. Most disruptions occur in the classroom. Teachers feel students have few social skills. Not much fighting occurs on campus; students fight after school instead. The most recent serious incident at the school involved a student who was caught with codeine in his possession.

We examined the domains that guided our review of the high and low disorder schools to identify whether they made a difference in overall school safety and order and if so how.

School and Community Characteristics

Although we focused on policy-relevant factors, community characteristics such as poverty, unemployment, and exposure to violence clearly affected the general safety and levels of disorder in the schools we visited. With one exception, the high disorder schools served students from communities where the risk factors for disorder were higher and the low disorder schools served students in communities with fewer risk factors. The one exception was a magnet school with competitive admissions and a low level of disorder that happened to be located in a neighborhood with higher risk factors.

Census data indicate that the low disorder schools in our study are located in more affluent locations. For example, the census tract surrounding the high disorder schools is more than twice as likely to have individuals on public assistance and twice as likely to have families living within the census poverty classification.

Research indicates that in neighborhoods plagued by problems of high unemployment and poverty, children are more likely to be taught to be violent by exhortation, witness violent acts, and have role models who do not adequately control their anger (Prothrow-Stith, 1991; Wilson, 1995). Because youth violence occurs within a context, understanding the ecological settings is of critical importance when describing school violence.

Programs

The number and types of prevention programs and activities did not seem to be related to school safety and disorder. We also saw no evidence that prevention programming made a difference, but this was primarily because so few of the schools evaluated the effectiveness of their programs. We found anecdotal evidence that the quality of program implementation and the appropriateness of a program for the specific needs of a school made a difference in its effectiveness for individual students or groups of students.

Schools that were ranked as low disorder schools had less prevention programming than schools that were rated as high disorder. Our hypothesis about this difference is that schools increase programming based on level of need. Hence, the low disorder schools do not allocate their resources towards these preventive programs, as their problems do not warrant these measures. The low disorder schools were more likely (3:1) to use architectural changes (fencing, lighting, windows, opening up hallways and gathering areas) than were the high disorder schools. This approach is more systemic and expensive, and it may be related to financial resources and overall school climate.

Security

Appropriateness was key to school security measures. Having security devices, personnel, and strategies that were adequate to the situation of a school made all the difference. For example, the low disorder schools had few security measures but they did not need more and they consistently applied those that were in place. The high disorder schools reported three times as many security interventions (emergency buttons for teachers, walkie-talkies, police presence) as the low disorder schools. However, these security measures were sometimes incompletely implemented—for example, intercoms that did not work or a fence with gaps.

Discipline

Specific discipline structures within schools (e.g., specific staff responsible for in-school suspension versus out-of-school suspension) were less important than clear expectations for behavior and a general respect for school rules. The low disorder schools had a variety of discipline structures but all set clear expectations for student behavior. High disorder schools were twice as likely to report being inconsistent in their discipline procedures compared with low disorder schools.

The approaches toward handling various problematic behaviors varied. For example, high disorder schools reported much more use of "zero tolerance" policies as compared with low disorder schools (5:1). (See the section in Chapter 4 on the consequences of violating or complying with rules.)

School Climate

School climate was assessed along the dimensions of relationships, goals, rules, and environment. We found subtle differences between low and high disorder schools regarding relationships. Generally, both types of schools had good relationships reported between students, teachers, administration, and community members. However, more communication problems (strained relationships, unclear messages) were found in the high disorder schools. Regarding the goals of the both types of schools, students reported feeling safe more often at the low disorder schools than at the high disorder schools. Relating to the rules of the schools, the high disorder schools reported a lack of consistency of leadership more often than did the low disorder schools. Finally, regarding the physical environments of these schools, the high disorder schools were consistently described as older, in more disrepair, dirty, highly secured; and residing in neighborhoods described as poor, with high unemployment, and with drug, prostitution and gang activity. The low disorder schools (except for School A, which is a magnet school) were consistently described as clean, new, and located in areas of low crime, with resources such as new computer facilities often cited as examples.

As discussed earlier, the factors that seemed to most affect school safety and disorder were related to school climate and management. These include:

- Clear, consistent, proactive approach to maintaining discipline;
- Strong, active, and involved principals;
- Sense of teamwork and shared responsibility among staff;
- Active involvement of teachers in maintaining order in and out of the classroom; and
- Positive relationships characterized by respect, collegiality, and open communication.

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APPENDIX A

Methods

The intensive level study gathered extensive qualitative and quantitative information from a purposive sample of 40 schools. In this chapter, we briefly describe the methods used in this study. We cover school selection, data collection, and analysis. We also discuss the strengths and limitations of our methods.

Intensive Level School Selection

In selecting schools for the intensive level study, we sought to identify schools that differed on school safety, but that were similar on background characteristics including number of students enrolled and metropolitan status of the area in which the school was located. This approach was designed to permit us to answer the study question on the policy-relevant characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools; it also ensured that the schools would vary on safety and characteristics, which would make for richer descriptions.

We drew a purposive sample of schools, with the objective of including 40 schools (20 middle and 20 senior high schools) in the intensive level study. All of these schools were among the over 230 intermediate level study schools that achieved relatively high levels of participation in the student and teacher surveys conducted in 1998. We limited our selection to public secondary schools. The criteria for selecting the schools included the following:

- Instructional level – middle schools and senior high schools;
- Number of students enrolled—small and large schools; and
- Metropolitan status—urban, suburban, and rural schools.

The result was a 12-cell matrix: two levels of instructional level by two levels of size by three levels of metropolitan status. In addition, we included a thirteenth cell for vocational education schools.

After categorizing each of the schools from the intermediate level study into these cells, we ranked them within cells according to their safety. We developed and combined several measures of safety based on the results of the principal, teacher, and student surveys—for example, on teacher and student victimization—conducted as part of the intermediate level study.

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Since we intended to contrast comparable schools that differed on safety, we sought to match relatively safe schools and relatively unsafe schools within each cell. The matching variables included school poverty (e.g., based on percentage of students eligible for the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program), student race/ethnicity, and measures of social disadvantage within the communities immediately surrounding the schools (e.g., percent of single parent households and percent of households under the poverty level in the census tract). Based on previous experience we expected a 75 percent response rate at the school level. We purposively selected four primary candidates (two safe and two unsafe), and two back up candidates (one safe and one unsafe) from each cell. In three of the senior high cells, after applying the selection criteria, we had only three primary candidates. We also selected two primary vocational schools and 1 back up.

We attempted to recruit all primary candidates. Initial efforts were successful with 19 of the 24 middle school candidates—at least three in each cell. However, one middle school had to withdraw its offer to participate as we were preparing for data collection activities. We contacted two back up schools in the affected cells, and both agreed to participate for a total of 20 middle schools. We were able to reach our recruitment goals in four of the six senior high school cells. Two of the primary candidates in one cell were unable to participate. We recruited our back up candidate. In addition, two of the schools in another cell were unable to participate. Because our original sampling efforts had not identified any back up candidates for that cell, we reexamined all of the previously unselected candidate schools. Of those candidates, we selected and recruited the two schools with the most similar background characteristics. The reasons for school nonparticipation include the unavailability of school staff to coordinate data collection efforts and competing school activities (e.g., state testing and building construction).

Data Collection

We collected qualitative and quantitative information from diverse sources at each of the 40 schools in the intensive level study. The primary vehicle for collecting this information was one round of three-day site visits to each of the schools. After successfully recruiting schools, project staff coordinated closely with a school staff person at each school (school coordinator) who was responsible for identifying appropriate information sources, scheduling appointments, and making other arrangements. While at a school, a senior site visitor and a junior site visitor made systematic observations; reviewed records on incidents of violence; and conducted in-depth interviews with district officials, principals, and school staff. With the assistance of the school coordinator, we also conducted surveys of all teachers and a sample of students.

The topics covered by the intensive level study overlapped with those covered by the intermediate level—but in somewhat greater depth and from additional sources (e.g., police and school security staff)—and other topics that are difficult to capture well in surveys, such as local dynamics (e.g., youth gang activity) that contribute to school violence, and the development of community and school prevention strategies that are intended to change these dynamics. The information sources are as follows.

- Interviews with the school principal, program providers, head of security/facilities, district administrator for school safety issues, and police officer for school/community relations;
- Focus groups with students who have and have not been victims of school violence; [10]
- Survey of all teachers and a sample of students;
- Information from school and police records; and
- Site observation forms.

Wherever possible, the data collection drew from extant instruments and design strategies. Survey items have built on an established research base to ensure the study's ability to measure implementation and school climate. Many questions were drawn from studies previously conducted in the areas of school safety and discipline, and youth violence, victimization, and drug use. These studies include the Safe Schools Study, Monitoring the Future, the National Household Education Survey, and the Schools and Staffing Survey. We discuss each of the data sources and instruments used.

In-depth Interview and Focus Group Guides. These instruments covered different, but overlapping, topics. In all, the data collected describes violence prevention efforts, evaluation efforts related to violence prevention projects, and school climate. For example, interviews with program providers covered the following topics: (a) interviewee background, role, and activities in the program; (b) history of, and initial impetus for, the program, including how it was started and who was involved; (c) organization, staffing, and funding of the program; (d) degree, level, and type of collaboration among the school, police, and community; (e) strategies and approaches to the program design and perceived successes of different activities; (f) barriers to implementing the program and what was done to overcome them; and (g) assessment of strengths, weaknesses and overall quality of the program. We selected program providers to interview based on the five or so activities that school coordinators identified as the most important ones for preventing or reducing problem behavior in their schools.

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[10] We carefully selected students who had been victims of school violence, based on consultations with school mental health staff. No students who had experienced severe or traumatizing events were selected for these focus groups. We obtained parental permission for the participants.

Teacher and Student Surveys. These surveys collected information from all the teachers and a sample of students in each school on their experience with violence prevention efforts and with school disorder. The information on teacher- and student-reported school disorder provided valuable information on how school characteristics may be related to the selection and implementation of prevention efforts. At each school, we drew a stratified random sample of approximately 400 students; the strata were defined by grade levels and gender. At schools that had fewer than 400 students, exactly 400 students, or slightly more than 400 students, we surveyed all students. We obtained passive parental consent for student participation in the surveys. Following study procedures that guaranteed confidentiality (as approved by the Westat Institutional Review Board), school staff surveyed the students in intact classrooms.

The self-administered questionnaire for **teachers** focused on school safety, victimization, school climate, and level of implementation of prevention programming. It collected information in the following areas: (a) background information, including years of teaching and years teaching in this school; (b) amount of in-service training in classroom management, instructional methods, and prevention of problem behavior in the past two years; (c) student behaviors in class; (d) personal safety; (e) school climate, including the relationships between administrators and teachers, how these teachers perceive administrators and the rest of the teaching staff, and ability of staff to collaborate and work together towards shared goals and objectives; and (f) information on the school's programs and practices to prevent problem behavior or to increase school safety or orderliness.

The self-administered questionnaire for **students** covered the following topics: (a) demographic information; (b) educational plans and efforts; (c) school safety; (d) victimization; (e) students' access to, and experiences with, drug use, violence, and other delinquent behavior; (f) school climate, including fairness of rules and their enforcement; (g) correlates of problem behavior, such as "risk and protective factors;" and (h) participation in prevention programming activities.

Abstract Forms. These forms recorded data on criminal and noncriminal disorder from school and police records. Data were collected for each serious incident reported. This included, for example, location of the incident within the school, day and time of day the incident occurred, and situations that led up to the event. A school record abstract form also collected enrollment information, student characteristics, staff information, instructional information, and discipline data.

Observation Form. This form recorded signs of disorder on the school campus and in the surrounding community. It also captured information on the physical security of the school, including how well lit the parking lot is; presence of adults on school grounds, in hallways, and in other non-classroom areas before, after, and between class periods; and whether or not students loiter on these grounds during the time that school is in session. In addition, the form described aspects of classroom management, such as the extent to which students were "on task."

Analysis

We conducted within-school analyses for the 40 individual schools as well as cross-school analyses. The site visitors conducted within-school analyses as they developed case study reports based primarily on the qualitative information that they collected on site. These reports conformed to a detailed report outline that has tied to the data collection instruments. The analysts combined information across sources to address topics in their reports. As needed, the site visitors or other project staff recontacted respondents to clarify information or to collect additional information.

In addition, we processed the quantitative data collected for each of the schools. These data included the student and teacher survey data, and incident report data and other data collected on the abstract forms. The quantitative data typically were unavailable to the site visitors while they were preparing their reports. We used them in the cross-site analyses.

The cross-site analyses involved iterative combing of the case study reports and quantitative data. The analysts typically reviewed the available information within the context of answering a specific study question. For example, the analysts assigned to the question on types of prevention efforts focused on the parts of reports that dealt with this topic. Although they collected some information on practically all prevention activities within a given school, the analysts tended to rely most on the information on the limited number of activities that they collected in interviews with program providers. (As mentioned, these interviews were on activities that the school coordinators nominated as the most important ones for preventing or reducing problem behavior in their schools.)

In the iterative review of the qualitative information, the analysts sought to identify themes and patterns of findings. They typically created electronic spreadsheets based on information extracted from the case study reports. This approach permitted the analysts to reduce the information to a manageable level for the purposes of review. Although the analyses were largely descriptive, some of them compared schools that differed on some important characteristic, such as the extent to which they relied on police officers or other personnel for security.

In answering the study question on characteristics and processes that distinguish safe and unsafe schools, we relied heavily on the quantitative information to categorize schools on safety. We developed several measures of school crime from the student and teacher survey results. The measure that we used to distinguish safe and unsafe schools was percent of students reporting that they were the victim of a serious crime (threatened with a weapon or robbed) in school during the current school year.

With the safety measure in hand, we conducted analyses across all schools. Separately for the middle schools and senior high schools, we identified the three schools with highest percentages on this measure and the three schools with the lowest percentages. Analysts then sought to identify any characteristics or processes that differentiated schools in the two groups.

We also planned to perform a similar analysis within the original selection cells, based on the intensive level study data. This analysis would have allowed us to control for some of the background characteristics that may affect school safety. However, because we found that the differences in school safety between schools within cells were relatively small (typically less than 10%), we decided that the analysis would yield little useful information.

Strengths and Limitations

The intensive level study is the first study in over 20 years to examine in detail what schools are doing to promote school safety. One of the greatest strengths of this study is that it combined quantitative and qualitative information. The quantitative information, mainly the student and teacher survey data, offered strong broad information that represented each school with fairly high precision. The qualitative information complemented the quantitative information by offering details and insights that are typically unavailable with surveys.

Another strength of the study is that it captured a broad range of perspectives and topics linked to the study questions. At a given school, we collected information from over ten different sources. Each source offered a unique lens on complex school safety issues.

A limitation of the intensive level study is that we are unable to generalize findings from it to other schools. The nonprobability selection of schools and sample sizes underlie this limitation. Another related limitation is that the assignment of schools to cells was imperfect. As mentioned, we based our measures of safety on survey data from a previous component of the study. Student survey data, one of those sources, were based on relatively small sample sizes that limited the precision of the measures. Hence, we found that—using more precise measures based on larger samples of students—some schools were misclassified on safety. Perhaps more importantly, despite our best efforts, a very large percentage of the schools included in the sample did not vary much along measures of disorder. This may be the result of the relatively high non-response rate associated with the intermediate study. The schools that complied with the survey requests tended to be safer better-managed schools. As a result, the site visits, which were based on the intermediate sample, did not include as wide a range of schools along the disorder dimension as would have been ideal for this type of analysis.

A final limitation follows from our approach of having the site visitors conduct the within-school analyses. While we gained strong summary reports that facilitated the cross-site analyses, we lost some of the detail that we potentially could have had in those analyses. In the cross-site analyses, we would have had stronger analyses had we relied on, for example, interview transcripts, rather than summary reports. With many different site visitors, we also inevitably introduced some error into the within-school analyses that carried over to the cross-site analyses.

SCHOOL CRIME PATTERNS:

A NATIONAL PROFILE OF U.S. PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS USING RATES OF CRIME REPORTED TO POLICE

REPORT ON THE STUDY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION

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REPORT ON THE STUDY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION

Prepared for:

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School Crime Patterns:
A National Profile of U.S. Public High Schools Using Rates of Crime Reported to Police Report on the Study on School Violence and Prevention

Summary

This report profiles violence in U.S. public high schools. It is based on analysis of data from a U.S. Department of Education survey of school principals that asked about the number and types of crimes they reported to police for the 1996-97 school year. The analysis shows that violence is clustered within a relatively small percentage of locations, with about 60 percent of the violence occurring in 4 percent of the schools. This is about four times higher than would be expected based on national rates of crime.

High schools are grouped by the nature and level of crimes occurring in the school. Four patterns emerge from this grouping: 1) No Crime, 2) Isolated Crime, 3) Moderate Crime and 4) Violent Crime. High schools in each group are described in terms of their student population characteristics, community characteristics, and school violence prevention efforts.

The results indicate that the characteristics (size, location, socio-economic make-up) of high-violence schools differ markedly from the other schools. High schools with the highest levels of violence tended to be located in urban areas and have a high percentage of minority students, compared to high schools that reported no crime to the police. They also tended to be located in areas with high social disadvantage and residential mobility. It should be noted, however, that a relatively large minority of the schools in the Violent Crime group were located in rural areas (36%), so that the image of school violence being solely restricted to central cities is not accurate.

The types of violence prevention programs differed between crime groups. The schools that experience a high level of serious violence also reported high use of prevention measures and programs that were specifically aimed at controlling violence. Schools in the Violent Crime group appeared to put more emphasis on programs geared toward changing individual behavior, such as behavioral modification or other types of individual attention. This contrasted with high schools in the other three crime groups, which tended to place a higher priority on prevention instruction or counselors within the school.

Similarly, the Violent Crime group was more likely than the other groups to adopt a variety of security measures to reduce risk of crimes, particularly random metal detectors, used by about one-third of the Violent Crime group (compared to 10% or less in the other groups). The crime groups also differed in their use of law enforcement and security personnel. The schools in the Violent Crime group were more likely to use this as a measure to control disorder than were schools with lower levels of crime.

These observations indicate that schools with the greatest need (i.e., highest rate of violent crime) took action at a fairly high rate (e.g., around two-thirds of the schools reported using many of the programs/activities). A follow-up question is whether these programs are effective at reducing violence. The current analysis did not allow for assessment of whether programs were implemented in an effective way and/or significantly reduced the amount of violence in the school.

The report suggests that methods to prevent school violence be tailored to the level and type of crime problems that schools are experiencing. Also, future evaluation of prevention methods should put some emphasis on schools experiencing the most severe problems. Comparing these schools to those with a similar profile but lower levels of disorder would be especially useful. This would provide an efficient and cost-effective way to better understand how to significantly reduce crime in the nation's high schools.

Contents

Chapter Page

SUMMARY i

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. WHAT PROPORTION OF HIGH SCHOOLS HAVE HIGH RATES OF VIOLENCE? 2

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH SCHOOLS WITH HIGH RATES OF VIOLENT CRIME 6

   3.1 SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS DISTINGUISHING SCHOOLS WITHIN CRIME GROUPS 8

   3.2 SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND OTHER PROBLEMS 10

   3.3 COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH CRIME PATTERNS 12

4. ARE THE METHODS TO CONTROL SCHOOL DISORDER RELATED TO THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE? 13

   4.1 PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES 14

   4.2 SECURITY STRATEGIES 18

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 20

List of Appendixes

Appendix

A IDENTIFYING SCHOOLS BY CRIMES RATES 24

Contents (continued)

List of Tables

Table Page

Table 1. Observed and Expected Distribution of U.S. Public High Schools According to the Number of Crimes Reported to Police, by Type of Crime⁺ 4

Table 2. Observed and Expected Distribution of Crime Incidents in U.S. Public High Schools According to the Number of Crimes Reported to Police, by Type of Crime⁺ 5

Table 3. Population and Rate of Crimes Reported to the Police in U.S. Public High Schools by School Crime Pattern (standard error in parentheses) 7

Table 4. School, Student and Community Characteristics in U.S. Public High Schools, by Crime Group (standard error in parentheses) 9

Table 5. School Disorder Composite Scores and Crime Patterns in U.S. Public High Schools (standard error in parentheses) 11

Table 6. Community Characteristics and School Crime Patterns in U.S. Public High Schools (standard error in parentheses) 13

Table 7. Percent of U.S. Public High Schools Reporting Use of Programs to Prevent Violence, by Type of Program and Crime Group (standard error in parenthesis) 16

Table 8. Rank of Use of Different Programs to Prevent Violence within each Crime Group for U.S Public High Schools 17

Table 9. Descriptions of Security Devices and Strategies Implemented in U.S. Public High Schools, by Crime Group (standard error in parenthesis) 20

Table A-1. Co-Occurrence of Rates of Crimes Reported to the Police for Serious Violence, Attach Without a Weapon, and Property Crime Among U.S. Public High Schools 25

Table A-2. Co-Occurrence of Rates of Crimes Reported to the Police for Attach Without a Weapon and Property Crime Among U.S. Public High Schools 26

1. Introduction

The Departments of Education and Justice report that schools are safe and secure learning environments (Kaufman, et al, 2000). Students are about 3 times less likely to be a victim of a violent crime at school than while away from school. Homicide also occurs rarely in schools. Of child homicides in 1997, less than one percent occurred in a school. Most school crime is, in fact, theft or fighting without weapons.

This overall low rate of crime and victimization in schools is somewhat deceiving. Crime is not randomly distributed across schools. For example, schools located in communities with high crime rates are more likely to experience crime than are schools in safer communities (Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1985). Beyond this basic observation, however, very little is known about the number and nature of schools that experience high levels of violence. Few studies have attempted to characterize schools on the basis of the amount of violence that occurs.

The purpose of this report, which focuses on high schools, is to address this issue by asking three basic questions:

- What proportion of high schools have high rates of violence?
- What are the characteristics of high schools with high rates of violent crime?
- Are the methods to control disorder related to the level of violence?

Identifying high schools with particular types of violence problems should provide more specific guidance on how to effectively target resources to school prevention efforts.[1]

To address these questions, this report describes analysis of the Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence (P-SDSSV). This survey, sponsored by the U.S.

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[1] Data are available on elementary and middle schools as well as high schools, but this report focuses only on high schools. Elementary schools overall have reported crime rates that are too low to make an analysis of their data worthwhile. Although an initial analysis of the middle school data revealed different crime patterns from high schools, further study indicated that it would not be feasible to analyze the middle school data separately. Combining data across educational levels (e.g., by combining middle and high schools) was not pursued, since such an analysis would have mixed too heterogeneous a set of populations and school policies (e.g., 12 year olds and 18 year olds) to allow for useful conclusions. For these reasons, this report concentrates on high schools, where violence reported to police is higher than for the other educational levels (US Department of Education, 1998).

Department of Education, asked principals to indicate the number and types of crimes reported to the police for the 1996-1997 school year.[2] Crime types included:

- Serious violence, including murder, suicide, robbery, rape, and assaults or fights with weapons;[3]
- Fighting or physical attack without weapons; and
- Property crimes, including vandalism and petty theft.

These three types of crimes were analyzed to identify and describe high schools with high levels of violence.[4] The next section provides estimates of the extent to which violence is disproportionately concentrated in a small subset of schools. The third section describes the characteristics of this subset of schools with high levels of violence. The fourth section discusses the relationship between community characteristics and levels of school violence. The fifth section discusses the prevention programs used by different types of schools. The final section of the report summarizes the results and discusses the limitations of the study.

2. What Proportion of High Schools Have High Rates of Violence?

Previous analysis of the P-SDSSV revealed that about one in five high schools reported any serious violent crime (e.g., fights with weapons, robbery) during the 1996-1997 school year. While this statistic gives a global indication of the prevalence of these crimes, it is difficult to judge from these data whether certain schools are disproportionately more likely to have high levels of violence. As long as the rate of violence in schools is greater than zero, one would expect at least some schools to have some violence. Is one in five schools more than would be expected, given the overall level of violence in the country? In this section we present analysis that assesses whether one in five schools represents any clustering of incidents within particularly violent schools or whether violence is distributed evenly across schools in the U.S.

There are important implications if violence is clustered within a small number of schools. There may be specific problems in these schools that lead to high levels of serious problem behavior. Issues that arise in these environments may not resemble those in schools with lower rates of crimes. Similarly, there may be unique remedies needed to solve these problems. The types of prevention programs and/or activities that are needed to reduce the violent behavior might have to be tailored to these particular environments.

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[2] These crimes did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

[3] Schools participating in the survey did not report any murders or suicides.

[4] The P-SDSSV had a sample size of 441 high schools.

Data provided in Table 1 provides estimates that measure the extent that violence is clustered within certain schools. These data compare the observed and expected number of high schools that reported a specified number of crimes to the police.[5] As this comparison reveals, if serious violent crime had been evenly distributed across all schools, one would expect that about 45 percent of schools (100% - 55% = 45%) would have reported having this type of crime. Instead, only about 20 percent (100% - 80% = 20%) of high schools included in the P-SDSSV reported this type of crime. In other words, less than half as many schools experienced serious violent crime as expected. About four times as many schools experienced five or more serious violent incidents as would be expected if crime were evenly distributed across all schools.

Similar disparities appear for the other two types of crimes. For attacks without a weapon, approximately 55 percent of the schools reported at least one incident. This was considerably lower than the 88 percent that would have been expected if these incidents were evenly distributed across all schools. For property crime, 67 percent of the schools reported at least one crime, while around 90 percent would have been expected to report this type of crime if it were evenly distributed across schools.

Table 2 displays an alternative way of looking at the distribution of crime incidents reported to police. This comparison is limited to schools that reported at least one crime. As can be seen, about 60 percent of the violence reported on the P-SDSSV occurred within the small number of schools that reported at least five violent crimes, more than seven times higher than expected if crime were evenly distributed across schools (7.8% expected). Similarly, about 14 times more schools than expected reported 26 or more attacks without a weapon (43.4% observed versus 2.7% expected). And nearly 42 percent of schools reported 26 or more property crimes, almost 7 times as many as expected based on school size alone.

This analysis provides evidence that for many schools serious violence is not a problem. Only a small percentage of schools seemed to have reported this type of crime. It also indicates, however, that for a small percentage of schools violence is extremely high.

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[5] The expected distribution was computed by assuming that the number of serious violent crimes was distributed as a Poisson distribution, with a rate equal to the average for the U.S. population of high school students.

Table 1. **Observed and Expected Distribution of U.S. Public High Schools According to the Number of Crimes Reported to Police, by Type of Crime**[+]

	Percent of Schools	
	Observed	**Expected**
Schools Reporting:	**Serious Violence***	
No crime	80.0	55.0
1 crime	10.0	26.0
2 crimes	2.4	11.4
3 crimes	2.0	4.7
4 crimes	1.3	1.9
5 or more crimes	4.3	1.1
	Attack Without a Weapon	
No crime	45.3	11.7
1 crime	8.1	12.2
2 crimes	8.6	10.5
3 – 5 crimes	12.2	24.4
6 – 10 crimes	10.4	23.5
11 – 15 crimes	7.3	11.1
16 – 20 crimes	2.1	4.4
21 – 25 crimes	1.5	1.6
26 or more crimes	4.5	.7
	Property Crime*	
No crime	33.7	10.4
1 crime	10.6	11.2
2 crimes	7.2	9.8
3 – 5 crimes	18.2	23.1
6 – 10 crimes	12.9	23.7
11 – 15 crimes	6.9	12.3
16 – 20 crimes	2.4	5.6
21 – 25 crimes	2.4	2.2
26 or more crimes	5.4	1.4

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence

[+] Expected distributions assume that crime is evenly distributed across schools. This distribution was computed assuming crime was distributed as a Poisson distribution with a rate equal to the average for the U.S. population of high school students.

[*] Serious violence includes: murder, sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon and robbery. Schools participating in the survey did not report any murders or suicides. Property crime includes theft/larceny (stealing without confrontation) and destruction of school property.

Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

Table 2. Observed and Expected Distribution of Crime Incidents in U.S. Public High Schools According to the Number of Crimes Reported to Police, by Type of Crime[+]

	Percent of Total Incidents	
	Observed	**Expected**
Schools Reporting:	**Serious Violence***	
No crime	n/a	n/a
1 crime	15.2	34.1
2 crimes	7.2	29.7
3 crimes	9.3	18.5
4 crimes	8.1	9.8
5 or more crimes	60.2	7.8
	Attack Without a Weapon	
No crime	n/a	n/a
1 crime	1.3	2.1
2 crimes	4.3	3.6
3 – 5 crimes	8.4	16.4
6 – 10 crimes	14.6	31.3
11 – 15 crimes	16.6	24.1
16 – 20 crimes	6.8	13.4
21 – 25 crimes	6.0	6.3
26 or more crimes	43.4	2.7
	Property Crime*	
No crime	n/a	n/a
1 crime	1.6	1.7
2 crimes	2.2	3.0
3 – 5 crimes	10.7	13.9
6 – 10 crimes	14.8	28.1
11 – 15 crimes	13.3	24.0
16 – 20 crimes	6.9	15.1
21 – 25 crimes	8.6	7.9
26 or more crimes	41.8	6.3

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence

[+] Expected distributions assume that crime is evenly distributed across schools. This distribution was computed assuming crime was distributed as a Poisson distribution with a rate equal to the average for the U.S. population of high school students.

* Serious violence includes: murder, sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon and robbery. Schools participating in the survey did not report any murders or suicides. Property crime includes theft/larceny (stealing without confrontation) and destruction of school property.

Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

3. Characteristics of High Schools with High Rates of Violent Crime

In this section, the characteristics of schools with high levels of violent crime are described. The characteristics that are examined include:

- School characteristics—Location (urban/rural), size, percent minority, and percent receiving free or reduced-price school lunch;
- School discipline and other problems—Composite indices of drug problems, disorderly behavior, and tardiness.
- Community characteristics—Composite indices of urban affluence, social disorganization, and residential mobility, based on Census data.

In order to describe schools by these characteristics, high schools were classified into four groups according to the types of crimes reported to the police. The methods used to identify these groups are discussed in Appendix A. The four groups of schools were defined as:

- Violent Crime—Schools with a high level of serious violent crime *or* schools with a moderate level of serious violent crime and a high level of attacks without a weapon.
- Moderate Crime—Schools not in group 1 above, but with a high level of either attacks without a weapon or property crime.
- Isolated Crime—Schools not in groups 1 or 2, but with a moderate level of some type of crime.
- No Crime—Schools with no incidents reported to police of any type of crime.

Table 3 displays the number and percent of schools in each group. The Violent Crime group included 5.6 percent of high schools in the U.S.[6] or about one in 18 schools. The Moderate Crime group included 18.1 percent of the schools. The most common pattern, the Isolated Crime group, characterized nearly 53 percent of high schools. About 25 percent of high schools were in the No Crime group.

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[6] The size of each group is, in part, a function of the cut-points used to define each of the three crime types (see Appendix A). Setting the thresholds for each "high" group with a lower crime rate would naturally expand the serious violent and reduce the size of the low crime group.

Table 3. Population and Rate of Crimes Reported to the Police in U.S. Public High Schools by School Crime Pattern (standard error in parentheses)

	Crime Pattern Group++			
	No Crime	Isolated Crime	Moderate Crime	Violent Crime
Number of Schools	3,625	8,157	2,790	868
Percent of Schools	23.5	52.8	18.1	5.6
	Incidents per 1000 Students			
Serious violence ++	0.0	.35	.20	5.9
	(0.0)	(.04)	(.05)	(.85)
Attacks without a weapon	0.0	4.1	22.1	35.0
	(0.0)	(.38)	(2.93)	(7.98)
Property crimes	0.0	6.0	31.2	18.1
	(0.0)	(.40)	(4.77)	(2.98)

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence

+ Serious violence includes: murder, sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon and robbery. Schools participating in the survey did not report any murders or suicides. Property crime includes theft/larceny (stealing without confrontation) and destruction of school property.

++Violent Crime – High level of serious violent crime reported to the police or schools with moderate levels of serious violent crime reported to the police and a high level of less serious violent crime reported to the police. Moderate Crime – Not in violent crime group, but with a high level of either less serious violent crime reported to the police or property crime reported to the police. Isolated Crime – Schools not in either violent or moderate crime, but with a moderate level of some type of crime reported to the police. No Crime – No incident reported to the police of any type of crime. Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

As can be seen from the crime rates for each group, the Violent Crime group has relatively high rates of all types of crimes. It has the most violence, with the highest rates of serious violence and attacks without a weapon. It also has high rates of property crime. The Moderate Crime group is distinguished by relatively high rates of attacks without a weapon and property crime rates. The Isolated Crime group has relatively low rates of all three types of crimes. It does have a slightly higher rate of serious violence than the Moderate Crime group. However, the rate for both of these groups is extremely low relative to the Violent Crime Group.

In the remaining sections, the characteristics of the crime groups are described in more detail. Small sample sizes limited the detail with which the data could be analyzed and discussed. The smallest group is the Violent Crime Group, which is based on 33 high schools. The analysis largely accounts for this by computing the standard errors for each estimate and conducting statistical significance tests. Nonetheless, since some of the analysis focuses on a relatively small group of schools, the most detailed tabulations for this group should be viewed with some caution.

3.1 School Characteristics Distinguishing Schools Within Crime Groups

The P-SDSSV collected a number of characteristics about the schools in the survey. These data are displayed in Table 4, including comparisons on enrollment, percentage of minority students, the type of location (central city vs. fringe/town vs. rural), region of the country and percentage of students that are eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch.

Schools in the Violent Crime group are very different from schools in the No Crime group. The schools in the Violent Crime group are larger (averaging 1,060 students), located in urban areas (28%) and have a high percentage of minority students (mean of 40% per school). While the Violent Crime group does have the largest component of urban schools (28.5%), about one-third of this group is located in rural (36%) and another third in fringe/town areas (35.5%). Therefore, problems related to serious violence in schools do not seem to be isolated to the central city.

This profile is in contrast to the schools in the No Crime group, which are, on average, much smaller (370 students per school), more likely to be located in rural areas (62%) and have a low percentage of minority students (mean of 12% per school). Surprisingly, these two groups of schools do not differ by the percentage of students that are eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch.

The differences between the Violent Crime group and the other two groups (i.e., Isolated and Moderate groups) are more complex. The schools in the Violent Crime group tend to be more urban and have a higher percentage of minority populations than schools in the other two groups. Contrary to expectations, these data do not show a strong relationship of crime group with school size and, to some extent, urbanicity. It is the case that the schools in the Violent Crime group are the largest. They are much larger, on average, than those schools in the Moderate Crime group (1,060 vs. 562). However, they are only slightly larger than the schools in the Isolated Crime group (1,060 vs. 930).

Table 4. School, Student and Community Characteristics in U.S. Public High Schools, by Crime Group (standard error in parentheses)

	Crime Pattern Group			
	No Crime	Isolated Crime	Moderate Crime	Violent Crime
Average Number of Students Enrolled per school	370 (42)	930 (39)	562 (55)	1,060 (146)
Average Percent Minority students per school	12.3 (2.3)	26.7 (2.1)	29.6 (5.2)	40.3 (5.4)
Average Percent Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch per school	21.2 (2.2)	22.0 (1.6)	25.9 (4.3)	20.0 (4.2)
School Location (% of schools in crime group)				
Rural	62.1 (4.7)	30.1 (2.6)	41.6 (6.0)	36.0 (10.4)
Urban Fringe/Town	30.4 (5.0)	52.5 (2.4)	43.2 (5.6)	35.5 (9.1)
Urban	7.5 (1.9)	17.4 (1.3)	15.2 (3.4)	28.5 (6.9)
Region (% of schools in crime group)				
Northeast	12.8 (4.8)	19.2 (2.8)	11.7 (3.9)	23.7 (9.0)
West	24.2 (6.0)	24.2 (2.6)	41.4 (7.2)	33.5 (9.7)
Central	41.2 (7.2)	30.8 (3.0)	27.3 (6.7)	19.1 (8.2)
Southeast	21.8 (5.0)	25.8 (2.6)	19.6 (5.5)	23.6 (8.0)

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence

Violent Crime – High level of serious violent crime reported to the police or schools with moderate levels of serious violent crime reported to the police and a high level of less serious violent crime reported to the police. Moderate Crime – Not in violent crime group, but with a high level of either less serious violent crime reported to the police or property crime reported to the police. Isolated Crime – Schools not in either violent or moderate crime, but with a moderate level of some type of crime reported to the police. No Crime – No incident reported to the police of any type of crime.

Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

More striking is the fact that the schools in the Isolated Crime group are both less likely to be in a rural area (30.1% vs. 41.6%) and are larger, on average, than the schools in the Moderate Crime group (930 vs. 562). One would have expected the opposite, since the Moderate Crime group has, on average, higher crime rates than the Isolated Crime group. This is inconsistent with the idea that larger, non-rural schools have higher levels of disorder.

3.2 School Discipline and Other Problems

School crime reported to the police is not only a function of the amount of disorder in the school, but also of the school's policies and informal practices for reporting crimes to the police. Thus, police reports may not provide the best measure of violence or disorder in schools. In addition, many crimes may never come to the attention of the principal. By profiling schools with police-reported crime, therefore, the analysis may be distorting the types of problems that are occurring within the school.

To address this issue, the analysis examined an alternative measure of problem behavior within the school. This utilized a set of items from the P-SDSSV on school discipline and other problems. Principals were asked to rate a set of 16 issues on whether each was a problem for their school. These included items about student behavior, drugs, fighting, gangs, racial tensions and problems with teachers.

A factor analysis was conducted using these 16 items. Based on the factor loadings of the items, three composite indices of problem behavior were created, including:

- Disorderly behavior;
- tardiness; and
- Drug-related issues.

The composite scores were scaled to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. A positive value on a composite score indicates that the school reported higher-than-average problems, while a negative value indicates lower than average reported problems. Table 5 displays the average composite disorder scores for each crime group.

The differences across these groups mirror the prevalence of crime within the four groups of schools. The biggest contrasts involve the Violent and No Crime groups. There are very large differences on all three of the problem composite scores (Drugs, disorder, and Tardiness) for these two groups. The No Crime group is also much different from the Isolated and Moderate groups on all three indicators. There are smaller, but still significant, differences among the Violent and Isolated/Moderate groups that mirror their crime patterns. In particular, the Violent Crime group is significantly different from the other two on the three types of problems. The only exception is that the difference between the Violent and Moderate Crime group for drugs is not statistically significant, although it is in the direction one would expect.

There are no differences between the Isolated and Moderate groups. These two groups are similar with respect to what principals report about the types of problems in their schools.

The consistency of principal reports of problems and the school's classification into one of the four crime groups is evidence that both are measuring, to some degree, the same phenomena.

Table 5. School Disorder Composite Scores and Crime Patterns in U.S. Public High Schools (standard error in parentheses)

	Crime Pattern Group++ (Mean Composite Score for Schools in that Group)			
Disorder Composite+	**No Crime**	**Isolated Crime**	**Moderate Crime**	**Violent Crime**
Drugs	–.56 (.11)	.04 (.07)	.12 (.15)	.37 (.24)
Fighting	–.60 (.07)	–.13 (.07)	–.18 (.10)	.74 (.13)
Tardiness	–.78 (.15)	.08 (.06)	–.08 (.14)	.35 (.18)

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence

+There is a composite score for each type of disorder. Composite scores indicate the level of that particular type of disorder was reported by the principal in the school. All composites have a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. Positive values indicate higher than average for that type of disorder. Negative values indicate lower than average for that particular type of disorder.

++ Violent Crime – High level of serious violent crime reported to the police or schools with moderate levels of serious violent crime reported to the police and a high level of less serious violent crime reported to the police. Moderate Crime – Not in violent crime group, but with a high level of either less serious violent crime reported to the police or property crime reported to the police. Isolated Crime – Schools not in either violent or moderate crime, but with a moderate level of some type of crime reported to the police. No Crime – No incident reported to the police of any type of crime.
Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

The principal's report, while subjectively based, does seem to be grounded in behaviors observed in the school, as evidenced by the correlation of these reports with the crime groupings. Conversely, this correlation is also evidence that the crime groupings, which are based on incidents reported to the police, are indicative of behaviors the principal is observing. The major exception to this is the comparisons between the Isolated and Moderate Crime groups. In this case, the perceptions of the principal do not entirely correspond with what has been reported to the police.

3.3 Community Characteristics Associated with Crime Patterns

To explore whether community characteristics such as poverty, racial composition, mobility, or average educational level were associated with school crime patterns, Census data for the school's zip code were added to the data set. As possible correlates of community-level crime, the specific variables chosen for this purpose were based on a previous analysis of community characteristics and school crime (Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1985).

A total of 15 variables were drawn from the Census file. To summarize these items, a factor analysis was conducted. This resulted in three dimensions describing the make-up of the zip codes:

- Urban high income—Median family income, percent of population living in an urban area, percent with a college degree, and percent of those in managerial or professional occupations.
- Social Disadvantage—Percent of households that were female-headed, percent receiving public assistance, percent of population reporting race as black, percent divorced and percent unemployed.
- Residential mobility—Percent of housing units that are owner occupied, and households in the same unit between 1985 and 1990.

Based on the factor loadings, composite scales were created for each of these dimensions. The scales were created to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. A positive value should be interpreted as high on each of the above dimensions (e.g., high residential mobility, high social disadvantage). A negative value should be interpreted as low on each of the above dimension. Table 6 compares the mean composite scores for schools in the crime pattern groups.

As with the results above, the largest differences are between the No Crime and Violent Crime groups. The former are less likely to be in urban high income communities, more likely to have low levels of social disadvantage, and more likely to have low residential mobility. No significant differences were found between the three groups of schools that experience at least some crime (Isolated, Moderate and Violent).

The power of the community characteristics, therefore, seems to be in distinguishing between schools with very low and very high crime rates. The community characteristics do not distinguish among the Isolated, Moderate and Violent Crime groups. This could reflect the complex relationship between communities and school disorder. Previous analyses have used relatively small units, such as blocks or Census Tracts, to measure the immediate geographic area of the school. The areas used for matching in the present analysis (i.e., zip codes) may be too large. In addition, the school's zip code does not necessarily relate to the neighborhoods in which the students are living. With busing, magnet schools, and other special programs, the "catchment area" of schools may not coincide with the geographic area covered by the zip code. Finally, 1990 Census data was used, so communities may have changed by the time of the survey (1996-1997 school year).

Table 6. Community Characteristics and School Crime Patterns in U.S. Public High Schools (standard error in parentheses)

Community Characteristic Composite+	Crime Pattern Group++ (Mean Composite Score for Schools in that Group)			
	No Crime	**Isolated Crime**	**Moderate Crime**	**Violent Crime**
Urban high income	–.25 (.10)	.17 (.08)	.26 (.11)	.14 (.14)
Social disadvantage	–.18 (.07)	.07 (.07)	–.05 (.13)	.40 (.21)
Residential mobility	–.24 (.14)	.07 (.07)	.06 (.15)	.15 (.15)

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence; U.S. Census

+There is a composite score for each of the three characteristics listed in the table. All composites have a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. Positive values indicate higher than average for that characteristic. Negative values indicate lower than average for that characteristic. A high value on "urban high income" reflects the contrast between urban high income areas and all others (e.g., rural areas, suburban areas, etc..).

++ None of the differences between the Isolated Crime group, the Moderate Crime group and the Violent Crime Group were statistically significant.

Violent Crime – High level of serious violent crime reported to the police or schools with moderate levels of serious violent crime reported to the police and a high level of less serious violent crime reported to the police. Moderate Crime – Not in violent crime group, but with a high level of either less serious violent crime reported to the police or property crime reported to the police. Isolated Crime – Schools not in either violent or moderate crime, but with a moderate level of some type of crime reported to the police. No Crime – No incident reported to the police of any type of crime.

Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

This complexity is also reflected in the finding that the Violent Crime Group has a positive score on "urban high income" dimension. One would not normally expect violent crime to be located in affluent areas. For example, the Violent Crime Group has a high score on the "social disadvantage" composite. It should be noted that the score for the Violent Crime Group is not statistically different from zero. Nonetheless, the positive value for the Violent Crime

Group for the "urban high income" composite may also reflect the urban nature of these communities when compared to rural areas, which are more likely to be in the No Crime Group.

4. Are the Methods to Control School Disorder Related to the Level of Violence?

In this section, we discuss whether high schools in the four crime groups differ by the methods they used to prevent violence. We first discuss the use of specific violence prevention activities and programs. We next discuss whether schools in different crime groups have implemented different security practices.

4.1 Prevention Programs and Activities

The P-SDSSV asked principals to report whether their schools conducted specific programs or activities intended to prevent or reduce school violence. The list of program types was developed as part of another effort concerned with documenting and evaluating these activities (Gottfredson, et al., 2000).

The programs included on the P-SDSSV were:

- Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training for students;
- Behavioral programming or behavior modification for students;
- Counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic activity for students;
- Other activities involving individual attention for students (e.g., tutoring, mentoring);
- Recreational, enrichment, or leisure activities for students;
- Student involvement in resolving student conduct problems (e.g., conflict resolution, student court);
- Training, supervision, or technical assistance in classroom management for teachers;
- Review, revision, or monitoring of school wide discipline practices and procedures;
- Community or parent involvement in school violence prevention programs or efforts; and

- Reorganization of school, grades, or schedules (e.g., "houses" or "teams" of students.

Across all high schools, the most common prevention activity in 1996-97 was reviewing or monitoring school wide discipline (62% of schools). The least common activity was reorganization of schools, grades, or schedules (25%). On average, high schools reported implementing 3.2 violence prevention activities during 1996-97.

Table 7 compares crime groups by the use of each prevention activity. Some prevention programs or activities were very unlikely to be used across all crime groups. These included school reorganization efforts, community or parent involvement in violence prevention, and student involvement in resolving student conduct problems. Likewise, other activities were used frequently regardless of crime pattern. These included review, revision, and monitoring school disciplinary practices, and counseling or therapeutic activities for students.

The No Crime group was the least likely to have used any of the activity types. In contrast, the Violent Crime group was most likely to use seven of the ten activities. The higher use of some activities by this group may reflect these schools' greater need to control violence and other types of disorder. These schools may respond by instituting more programs to try to reduce the problem.

Table 7. Percent of U.S. Public High Schools Reporting Use of Programs to Prevent Violence, by Type of Program and Crime Group (standard error in parenthesis)

Type of Program	Crime Pattern Group+ (Percent of Schools in Crime Group)			
	No Crime	Isolated Crime	Moderate Crime	Violent Crime
Review, revision, or monitoring of school-wide discipline practices and procedures	49.0 (6.2)	67.5 (3.1)	58.0 (6.3)	69.0 (9.3)
Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training for students	49.2 (7.1)	60.3 (3.1)	57.3 (7.9)	58.1 (10.7)
Counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic activity for students	46.6 (6.4)	64.1 (4.0)	64.2 (6.6)	60.4 (10.8)
Other activities involving individual attention for students (e.g., tutoring)	45.1 (6.4)	63.1 (3.2)	54.5 (6.6)	74.9 (8.7)
Training, supervision, or technical assistance in classroom management for teachers	40.0 (6.3)	50.8 (3.6)	41.6 (6.6)	67.6 (9.5)
Recreational, enrichment, or leisure activities for students	37.1 (6.8)	46.9 (3.6)	44.2 (6.7)	60.8 (9.8)
Behavioral programming or behavior modification	36.2 (6.4)	57.3 (3.2)	44.8 (7.2)	73.0 (9.0)
Student involvement in resolving student contact problems (e.g., conflict resolution, student court)	27.1 (6.0)	47.3 (3.1)	39.2 (6.5)	51.5 (10.1)
Community or parent involvement in school violence prevention	19.4 (5.3)	39.3 (2.9)	39.9 (6.7)	39.9 (10.4)
Reorganization of school, grades, or schedules (e.g., "house" or "teams" of students)	16.1 (5.0)	26.3 (2.9)	24.9 (5.6)	44.8 (11.1)

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence

+ Violent Crime – High level of serious violent crime reported to the police or schools with moderate levels of serious violent crime reported to the police and a high level of less serious violent crime reported to the police. Moderate Crime – Not in violent crime group, but with a high level of either less serious violent crime reported to the police or property crime reported to the police. Isolated Crime – Schools not in either violent or moderate crime, but with a moderate level of some type of crime reported to the police. No Crime – No incident reported to the police of any type of crime.

Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

Table 8 provides a different way of describing school prevention activities. It ranks prevention activities by the number of schools that used the activity, for each crime pattern group. Review, revision, and monitoring school-wide discipline practices and procedures was one of the top three activities for all four crime pattern groups. Training, supervision, or technical assistance in the classroom was in the middle of the rankings for all four groups, as was recreational enrichment. Three prevention activities were consistently infrequent across all groups: student involvement in resolving student conduct problems, community or parent involvement in school violence prevention efforts, and reorganization of schools.

Table 8. Rank of Use of Different Programs to Prevent Violence within each Crime Group for U.S. Public High Schools

Type of Program	Crime Pattern Group+ (1= most frequent; 10=least frequent) No Crime	 Isolated Crime	 Moderate Crime	 Violent Crime
Review, revision, or monitoring of school-wide discipline practices and procedures	1	1	2	3
Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training for students	1	4	3	7
Counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic activity for students	3	2	1	5
Other activities involving individual attention for students (e.g., tutoring)	4	3	4	1
Training, supervision, or technical assistance in classroom management for teachers	5	6	7	4
Recreational, enrichment, or leisure activities for students	6	7	6	6
Behavioral programming or behavior modification	7	5	5	2
Student involvement in resolving student contact problems (e.g., conflict resolution, student court)	8	7	9	8
Community or parent involvement in school violence prevention	9	9	8	10
Reorganization of school, grades, or schedules (e.g., "house" or "teams" of students)	10	10	10	9

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence

+ Violent Crime – High level of serious violent crime reported to the police or schools with moderate levels of serious violent crime reported to the police and a high level of less serious violent crime reported to the police. Moderate Crime – Not in violent crime group, but with a high level of either less serious violent crime reported to the police or property crime reported to the police. Isolated Crime – Schools not in either violent or moderate crime, but with a moderate level of some type of crime reported to the police. No Crime – No incident reported to the police of any type of crime.

Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

There were differences in the prevention activities used by the different crime groups, especially between the Violent Crime group and the other three groups. For example, prevention curriculum, instruction, and training differed between the Violent Crime group and the other three groups. Prevention curriculum activities involve classroom instruction that aims to prevent problem behaviors such as drug use or fighting. This strategy was the most commonly used by schools in the No Crime group. Similarly, schools in the Isolated Crime group mentioned it third most frequently, while the Moderate Crime group mentioned it fourth most frequently. In contrast to this, this activity ranked seven out of ten for the Violent Crime group.

A high proportion of the Violent Crime group used activities that required more planning and individual attention. This suggests that broad-brush approaches to violence prevention may be viewed as ineffective in schools that have a significant amount of violence. Behavioral programming and modification ranked second among schools in this group, but ranked fifth for schools in the Moderate and Isolated Crime groups. It ranked seventh for the No Crime group. Schools in the Violent Crime group also relied on other activities involving individual attention for students, which ranked first among these schools. This strategy varied between the third and fourth most common activity among the schools with other crime patterns.

A final difference among the crime groups involves prevention strategies that involve counseling and social work. Among schools in the No Crime, Isolated Crime, and Moderate Crime groups, this type of activity appeared as one of the top three approaches. This contrasted to the Violent Crime group, where it ranks as the fifth most commonly used strategy.

4.2 Security Strategies

An obvious way for schools to prevent violence is through security devices and strategies. The P-SDSSV included a series of questions on security strategies, including whether the school used the following:

- Controlled access to school grounds,
- Metal detectors through which all students pass each day,
- Random metal detector checks on students,
- One or more drug sweeps, and
- Police or security officers (hours per week that officers were on campus).

Table 9 compares the use of security strategies by schools in the different crime groups. The high schools that experience the most violent crime are also the ones that report using these devices and strategies most frequently. Schools in the Violent Crime group consistently use the most security devices. On average, these schools use 1.23 different strategies, significantly more than in the other crime groups. Schools in the No Crime group use significantly fewer types of security strategies than do schools in the Isolated or Moderate Crime groups.

Differences between crime groups also appear within particular strategies. As would be expected from the mean number of security measures, a higher proportion of the schools in the Violent Crime group reported using each of the individual strategies more often than the other types of schools. The largest difference is for the use of a random metal detector check, where 32.7% of the Violent group reported using this strategy compared to 10% or less among the other three groups. The Moderate Crime group and the Isolated Crime group exhibited some interesting differences. On the one hand, compared to the Isolated Crime group, a higher proportion of the Moderate Crime group used drug sweeps. On the other hand, more schools in the Isolated Crime group used controlled access to school grounds and random metal detectors.

The use of police or other security personnel was another approach used by schools. The P-SDSSV asked principals the amount of time enforcement personnel were stationed in the school. The survey defined enforcement personnel to include police officers, school resource officers, and other security with arrest powers that are hired by the school. The four groups of schools differ on this as well.

Among schools in the Violent Crime group, 33.1 percent report having this type of personnel on campus for at least 30 hours per week, compared to only 5 percent of the schools in the No Crime group. The schools that reported at least some crime also reported more police presence than did those in the schools No Crime group (22% - 24% vs. 5%). Smaller, marginally significant differences appeared between the Violent Crime group and the Moderate Crime and Isolated Crime groups.

Table 9. Descriptions of Security Devices and Strategies Implemented in U.S. Public High Schools, by Crime Group (standard error in parenthesis)

	Crime Pattern Group+			
	No Crime	**Isolated Crime**	**Moderate Crime**	**Violent Crime**
Average number of security measures per school	.60	.86	.77	1.23
	(.08)	(.07)	(.11)	(.23)
Percent of Schools With:				
Controlled access to school grounds	14.3	30.8	17.6	36.3
	(3.9)	(2.8)	(5.6)	(9.8)
Metal detectors and pass	.3	2.2	2.5	6.7
	(.3)	(.85)	(2.1)	(3.6)
Random metal detectors	2.7	10.5	5.2	32.7
	(1.6)	(1.8)	(2.4)	(8.0)
≥ 1 drug sweeps	42.3	43.0	51.8	51.1
	(6.6)	(4.3)	(6.7)	(11.0)
No police	83.2	47.8	45.5	30.5
	(5.0)	(3.7)	(6.6)	(9.4)
Police ≥ 30 hours per week	5.0	22.5	24.4	33.1
	(2.1)	(1.9)	(5.7)	(9.4)

Source: Principal-School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence

+ Violent Crime – High level of serious violent crime reported to the police or schools with moderate levels of serious violent crime reported to the police and a high level of less serious violent crime reported to the police. Moderate Crime – Not in violent crime group, but with a high level of either less serious violent crime reported to the police or property crime reported to the police. Isolated Crime – Schools not in either violent or moderate crime, but with a moderate level of some type of crime reported to the police. No Crime – No incident reported to the police of any type of crime.

Crimes reported to the police did not necessarily involve students or school personnel as either victims or perpetrators.

5. Summary and Conclusions

During the 1996-1997 school year, most U.S. public high schools were safe and secure. A large majority of high schools in the U.S. did not have high levels of violence and did not experience traumatic events. Rather, this analysis found that a disproportionately small number of schools accounted for a very high proportion of violent incidents. Roughly 60 percent of serious violent crimes occurred in 4 percent of the schools, four times higher than would be expected if these incidents were evenly distributed across schools. Schools that reported high levels of serious violence also reported high levels of other types of crimes as well, such as property crime and fights without weapons.

The analyses described in this report clearly show differences between schools with high and low levels of violence. This suggests that focusing on how high and low violence schools react to crime and then evaluating these policies would be an effective way to reduce violence in U.S. Further identification and analysis of these schools at a more in-depth level can increase understanding of the obstacles and successes that are related to controlling violence in these locations.

High schools with the highest levels of violence tended to be located in urban areas and have a high percentage of minority students, compared to high schools that reported no crime to the police. They also tended to be located in areas with high social disorganization and residential mobility. It should be noted, however, that a relatively large minority of the schools in the Violent Crime group were located in rural areas (36%), so that the image of school violence being solely restricted to central cities is not accurate.

The types of violence prevention programs differed between crime groups. The schools that experience a high level of serious violence also reported high use of prevention measures and programs that were specifically aimed at controlling violence. Schools in the Violent Crime group appeared to put more emphasis on programs geared toward changing individual behavior, such as behavioral modification or other types of individual attention. This contrasted with high schools in the other three crime groups, which tended to place a higher priority on prevention instruction or counselors within the school.

Similarly, the Violent Crime group was more likely than the other groups to adopt a variety of security measures to reduce risk of crimes, particularly random metal detectors, used by about one-third of the Violent Crime group (compared to 10% or less in the other groups). The crime groups also differed in their use of law enforcement and security personnel. The schools in the Violent Crime group were more likely to use this as a measure to control disorder than were schools with lower levels of crime.

These observations indicate that schools with the greatest need (i.e., highest rate of violent crime) took action at a fairly high rate (e.g., around two-thirds of the schools reported using many of the programs/activities). A follow-up question is whether these programs are effective at reducing violence. The current analysis did not allow for assessment of whether programs were implemented in an effective way and/or significantly reduced the amount of violence in the school.

Several caveats must be applied to the above results. First, there is error in the measure of crime. One type of error relates to how the principal or school disciplinarian provided information for the survey. Ideally, the information on the number of crimes reported to the police, the types of programs implemented, and other data are based on records residing within the school. However, the process of respondents actually looking up information in their records is not entirely clear-cut. The records may not exist at all, they may be organized in ways that are not consistent with how the question was asked, or the respondents may not understand that they need to use records. All of these possible problems likely contribute to the accuracy of the information reported.

A second caveat, as mentioned briefly above, is the reliance on crimes reported to the police as the primary measure of disorder in the school. Whether or not a crime is reported to the police depends on a two step process. First, the principal has to learn about the event, and second, the principal has to decide to report the event to the police. As with any data related to police-recorded crime, these steps may not be followed. The reasons they are not may very well differ by the type of event that occurs (e.g., serious vs. non-serious crime), the relationship of the school with the police, and the relationship among students, faculty, and administrators (e.g., student fear of retribution).

In conclusion, this analysis has shown that while many high schools in the country are safe, a small percentage of schools experience a disproportionate amount of serious violence, at least as measured by crimes the principal reported to the police. These schools are quite different from other schools along several important dimensions and merit more intensive investigation. This report also suggests that future measurement of crime within schools should be designed to pick up more detail on the small percentage of schools that seem to be experiencing this crime. The low frequency of any violent event, even in those schools with a relatively high crime rate, is such that detailed analysis in a national sample for a single year is quite difficult. Future surveys like the P-SDSSV should consider ways to increase the statistical power for these types of analyses. This would include increasing the sample size of schools with high rates of disorder and schools that have similar characteristics (e.g., urban, high social disadvantage).[7]

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[7] A concrete suggestion to address this would be to continue to follow-up a sample of schools in future data collection efforts like the P-SDSSV. By being able to cumulate reports of crime over time, the problems experienced with the small sample sizes in any single year's survey would be mitigated. This would also provide a way to assess whether crime in particular schools persists over time.

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Appendix A
Identifying Schools by Crime Rates

Section 3 of this report describes the characteristics of four groups of schools with different levels and types of crimes. This appendix provides a description of how these four groups were created.

For each type of crime (described in Section 2), school-level crime rates per 1000 students were computed. Crime rates were then divided into three crime levels. For serious violent crime, these levels were:

- Low—A rate of less than 1 incident per 1000 students;
- Moderate—A rate between 1 and 5 incidents per 1000 students; and
- High—A rate greater than 5 incidents per 1000 students (equivalent to five times the average rate or higher).

Slightly different levels were used for fighting without a weapon and property crimes:

- None—No crimes reported;
- Moderate—A rate more than zero and less than 21 incidents per 1000 students; and
- High—A rate of 21 or more incidents per 1000 students (equivalent to twice the average rate or higher).

There is a correlation among these different crimes. Schools that experienced moderate or high levels of serious violence were also more likely to experience other, less serious, types of crimes (e.g., vandalism). This is illustrated in Table A-1, which provides cross-tabulations of the crime level classifications for the three crime types reported on the P-SDSSV. Schools classified as having a high level of violent crime also experienced higher levels of the other two types of crimes.[8] For example, of the schools with high violent crime, 84 percent reported a moderate to high level of fighting without a weapon and 100 percent reported a moderate to high level of property crime. Among schools in the low serious violence level, only 50 percent had a moderate to high level of and only 62 percent reported a moderate to high level of property crime. Table A-2 displays the cross-tabulation of fighting without a weapon and property crime. Again, schools with a high level of fighting are more likely to have moderate or high property crime levels, compared to other schools.

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[8] All of the relationships displayed in Table A-2 are statistically signiricant at $p<.05$.

Table A-1. Co-Occurrence of Rates of Crimes Reported to the Police for Serious Violence, Attack Without a Weapon, and Property Crime$^+$ Among U.S. Public High Schools

	Serious Violence*			
	None	**Moderate**	**High**	**Total**
Attack Without a Weapon (Percent of Schools)				
No incidents	49.5	12.1	16.7	45.1
Moderate rate of incidents	38.4	56.2	59.8	41.3
High rate of incidents	12.1	21.7	24.1	13.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number of Schools	13,057	1,935	448	15,440
Property Crime* (Percent of Schools)				
No incidents	37.8	14.4	0.0	33.7
Moderate rate of incidents	49.9	62.6	83.9	52.5
High rate of incidents	12.2	22.9	16.1	13.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number of Schools	13,057	1,935	448	15,440

*Serious violence includes: murder, sexual battery, suicide, physical attack or fight with a weapon and robbery. Schools participating in the survey did not report any murders or suicides. Property crime includes theft/larceny (stealing without confrontation) and destruction of school property.

Table A-2. Co-Occurrence of Rates of Crimes Reported to the Police for Attack Without a Weapon and Property Crimes Among U.S. Public High Schools (percent of schools)

	Attack Without a Weapon			
	None	Moderate	High	Total
Property Crime*				
(Percent of Schools)				
No incidents	54.3	15.7	20.6	33.8
Moderate rate of incidents	37.0	74.0	38.7	52.5
High rate of incidents	8.7	10.3	40.7	13.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number of Schools	6,967	6,375	2,098	15,440

* Property crime includes theft/larceny (stealing without confrontation) and destruction of school property.

A Latent Class Analysis (LCA) was conducted using the three crime variables described above. This tested whether schools can be classified into groups defined by the rate of serious violence, fights without a weapon and property crime. The results of this analysis indicate that schools can be described by these three different types of crimes. Schools with a great deal of serious violence also tend to have other types of crimes. Conversely, there is a disproportionate number of schools that do not experience any of these types of crimes.

The classification into four groups was done by cross-classifying the three crime variables described above. This resulted in a table with 27 cells (3 x 3 x 3 = 27). The crime groups were formed by collapsing these 27 cells to form the following groups:

- Violent Crime—Schools with a high level of serious violent crime or schools with a moderate level of serious violent crime and a high level of fighting without a weapon.
- Moderate Crime—Schools not in group 1 above, but with a high level of either fighting without a weapon or property crime.
- Isolated Crime—Schools not in groups 1 or 2, but with a moderate level of some type of crime.
- No Crime—Schools with no incidents of any type of crime.

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